

# **Works of Cha. Fra. : A Study**

A Minor Research Project Report Submitted to  
University Grants Commission

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2008



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## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

This research report would not have been possible without the support of many people. I am grateful to St Aloysius College, where this project was initially sanctioned, and to Christ College, where this project has been completed. I am indebted to Dr Eugene Lobo SJ, the then Principal, St Aloysius College, and Dr Varghese CMI, Finance Officer, and Dr Thomas Mathew CMI, Principal, Christ College, who whole heartedly co-operated in the transfer of this project to Christ College.

I am also thankful to Dr Manju Singh and the staff at the South-Western Regional Office, UGC, Bangalore for all their co-operation through the ups and downs of the work.

Many thanks to Dr William Robert Da Silva, who not only helped open my eyes to the exciting world of Konkani literature, but also to the world of ideas. This work owes a lot to the exciting discussions I had with him. I am grateful to Gopala Gowda of Konkani Institute, St Aloysius College, and George Rodrigues, a committed librarian of the same college for their generous help in collecting material. Thanks also to Pratap Naik SJ, TSKK, Goa for his timely and valuable responses to all my queries. I also fondly remember the help of Dr Lourdusamy, Head, Department of English, St Aloysius College (Autonomous) towards the project.

Also, thanks to my loving family members – especially Marie and Annie - but for whose unrelenting support and care I would not have completed this work.

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## CHAPTER I

## **INTRODUCTION**

Research on Mangalore Christians and their cultural productions has been very little. As far as the researcher's knowledge goes, there have been no M.Phil.s or Ph.D.s produced on the voluminous and rich literary output in Konkani. The reasons are as much historical as socio-political. It is not only in this context that the present study gains unique importance.

### **The Konkani Christians**

The Konkani speaking people are spread across on the west coast of India, from Ratnagiri to Cochin. However, they use five different scripts across this region and produce literature in all these scripts, namely Roman, Devanagari, Kannada, Arabic and Malayalam. This is one of the rarest linguistic occurrences not only in India but also in the world. Of all these scripts, the highest volume of literature gets produced in Kannada script in Mangalore by Christians.

Although I use the term Christians throughout this work, it refers to Catholics who owe their religious allegiance to papal authority in Rome and who are also known as Roman Catholics.

Early studies on the history of Konkani language and people led the history of Konkani as far as the Vedic period and to River Saraswathi (Pai, (1959) 1995: 1-24) and Konkani Christians in South Canara saw themselves as the descendents of them who were converted by the Portuguese. In the popular imagination and a lot of contemporary works, this belief still thrives. For example Paul Moras' work (Moras, 2002: 1-24) on Konkani movements begins with the Vedic-origin theory. However, later studies by scholars like Olivine Gomes (Gomes, (1989) 1995, 36-56) try to reject such a proposition, perhaps because it is very much in line with the nationalist reactionary history and in consonance with the process of what M N Srinivas called Sanskritisation. The newer findings of Gomes locate the origin of Goan Christians, hence of most Canara Christians as well, to local tribes called Konkas.

Regarding the Konkani Christians in Canara, Pius Pinto argues, (Pinto, 2000: 269) "It was only after 1500 A.D. to 1763 A.D. Christians emerged as a significant force in the history of South Kanara. Catholic Christians migrated from Goa because of political, economic, cultural and other reasons .... In the context of South Kanara these original Christian settlers are called the Konkani Christians who had migrated from various places of Goa." However, the name Konkani Christians refers not only to the early settlers from Goa, but also to the local converts who were converted by the Jesuits through the Spanish mission. The Jesuits who arrived in 1878 apart from the educational work also took up conversions among the dalits.

The community, however, historically had to negotiate its political and religious identities with different colonial power centres. While after the fall of Tippu the political

identity of the community was negotiated with the Madras Presidency under British, the region had to look up to Goa which was a Portuguese colony for its religious identity which controlled all religious affairs in the region. It will be too naïve to consider this negotiation as a homogenous one. As Cha. Fra.'s play *Shirigundi Shimaon* points out there were divergent allegiances within the community, although Portuguese colonisers owed their allegiance to Rome. Sometimes there were rifts between two minor sects, in the play referred to as the Propagandists and Padrowados. This problem however ends with the arrival of Jesuits in the region almost four hundred years after the first settlements in the region. The starting of the Mangalore seminary by the Jesuits to train local people as priests ends this dual allegiance and consequently the dialectic and religious hegemony of Goa. This in a way gives rise to the emergence of print texts in local dialect, initially more of religious literature and gradually secular along with the religious.

### **Church and the Laity**

Although not much has been documented, there has been a constant rift between the church and the Konkani Christian *littérateur* of the region, constantly struggling and failing for secular space. It must be noted that there have not been any long surviving periodicals in this region run by lay people and there are instances of the church starting its own periodicals to counter the lay people's attempts in print in the name of faith. The classic example is the case of *Konkani Dirvem* and *Raknno*.



*Konkani Dirvem* was the first secular periodical in Kannada script started in 1912. After an illustrious existence of nearly three decades it closes in 1940. Paul Moras (Moras, 2005: 109-125) claims that *Konkani Dirvem* closed because of the displeasure of the Church which started *Raknno* 1938 to counter secular ventures in print medium, after explicitly banning the periodical *Samajicho Divo*.

The relationship between the church and the laity has been one of mistrust with the church dominating all secular activities. No linguistic or cultural activities happen without implicit or the explicit patronage of the church. The helpless mistrust of the church runs quite deep in the community. *Devache Kurpen*, a novel by ‘Khadap’ perhaps indicates the early cause in the dissertation of the people by the priests during the attack of Tippu on Canara and consequent captivity. This relationship between the church and the lay people is an important location for critical and creative engagement in Cha. Fra.’s works.

### **Konkani Christians and the Other Communities**

Konkani Christians coexist with the numerous other religious and linguistic and social groups. In the religious front they share the social space with Muslims, Hindus, and Protestants.

Muslims speak Byari (also called Nakk-Nikk) and Hindi/Urdu language. The Byari speaking Muslims are called Moplas, Naithe, Byari, and addressed in the suburban areas as Kaka. The Hindi/Urdu speaking Muslims are called ‘Thurk’. However, in the popular imagination the Byari speaking Muslims are generally present and it is these who mostly

come in the literary works. In Cha. Fra.'s works too it is the Byari community that comes. The Konkani community generally looks down upon them without giving much individuality. In the city at least it shares the general resentment of the dominant Hindu community, more so after the fall of the Babri Masjid and biased media coverage. This can also be led back to the negative representation of Muslims by the most-read daily among the Christians *Udayavani* which is owned by the Konkani Gowd Saraswath Community which has a long history of hatred towards the Muslim community.

The historical Tippu's captivity could also be one of the reasons for such not-so-pleasant attitude of Christians towards Muslim.

The Hindus mostly speak Tulu, while there are also Kannada and Konkani speaking ones. From among the Hindus most prominent communities that appear in literary works are those of Konkani speaking Gowd Saraswat Brahmins called 'Konknem', women from fishing communities referred to as 'Mogorlem', and Brahmins mostly referred to as 'Bhot'

Linguistically, being the lingua franca of the region, Tulu dominates Konkani. C. N. Ramachandran in one of his articles in *The New Indian Express* writes that Kannada is hegemonic to Tulu and both Tulu and Kannada are hegemonic to Konkani. As a result of such a linguistic and by extension cultural subjugation, Konkani speakers constantly finds code mixing and code switching even in the literary works. Cha. Fra., however, is careful in his work to as much as avoid possible code switches and code mixes.

Although there is no much social mingling of the Konkani speaking Christians with the Protestants at least during early phase of Cha. Fra., there was quite a cordial relationship with them. Many a time even intermarriages were common. However, with the Catholic Church taking an active role in reducing such interactions for fear of conversions to Protestantism, such interactions have seriously come down. In common parlance Protestants are normally referred to as ‘michinanchem.’ However, in the Konkani literary imagination Protestants have had little space.

### **Cha. Fra. and His Works**

Cha. Fra. was born in Mangalore on October 10, 1931 near Marnamikatta as the eldest of four children of Madthabai and Marcel D’Costa. He did his primary education in Cassia School and High School in Milagres School where the medium of instruction was English. He is supposed to have read Shakespeare’s plays in stories of Charles Lamb (D’Silva, 2000: 3).

He moved to Bombay in 1948 and worked in the Election Commission for the first general election of independent India. Later he became an employee of B.E.S.T. According to D’Silva (D’Silva, 2000: 3) during this period he became a member of Petit Library and read the works of Moliere, Henrick Ibsen and other canonical writers of Europe.

In 1951 he starts writing for *Painari*, a Konkani periodical then published by VJP Saldhana, a doyen of Konkani literature. In 1953 for the first time he read his Konkani

poem in All India Radio, Bombay in the Konkani section titled ‘Swapnantullem Raaz.’ This poem made him popular among many Konkani writers in Bombay and Goa. In 1955 he wrote his first play (SarDesai, 2000: 293) *Sobit Sounsar*. This play received much critical acclaim in Marathi dailies.

His next play *Avnkar Mesthrim* not only got reviews in *Free Press Bulletin* but also toured abroad. The play was also translated and performed in Tulu under the titles *Harishchandra Mastr* and *Satya Panade*.

His *Bhangar Monnis* is considered by many critics as the finest play of Cha. Fra. (D’Silva, 2000: 28). This play saw nearly 22 performances.

In 1969 he returned to Mangalore and staged the plays *Jorji Buthel*, and *Tornem Tornem Mornem*. He married in 1974 and in the same year he became the founder president of Konkani Bhasha Mandal. In 1976 he began a journal called *Jivith*. In 1986 he was honoured as the president of the All India Konkani Writers’ Conference in Goa. Around the same time he authored more than 150 songs for Mandd Sobhann, a cultural organisation which today has become one of most well-known Konkani cultural associations.

In 1986 he received the prestigious Central Sahitya Akademi Award for his anthology of poems *Sonshyache Kan*. This triggered series of write ups on him in English, Konkani and Marathi and translation of his works in Malayalam.

In 1990 he was felicitated by the Bishop of Mangalore on behalf of Mangalorean Konkani Christians. He was also awarded the title Konkani Sahitya Kularatna. He passed away in 1992.

Follwing are the list of 15 plays of Cha. Fra. that SarDesai mentions in his *A History of Konkani Literature*:

*Sobit Sounsar*

*Sunnem Mazor Hansta (One-Act)*

*Tomato (One-Act)*

*Vishenticho Bhav (One-Act)*

*Tornem Tornem Mornem (One-Act)*

*Poinnarancha Mitr*

*Bhangar Monis*

*Jorji Buthel*

*Mankddacho Pai*

*Magirchem Magir*

*Bokleak Sat Jiv*

*Kuvalyachi Val*

*Handdo Ovla*

*Bonch[o] Bandh*

*Dev Polleit Asa*

Stella' D'Costa's two volumes of edited works of Cha. Fra. which include 20 of his plays also include the following plays which SarDesai's book does not find a mention in.

*Doro*

*Them Tho and Hanv*

*Shirigundi Shimaon*

*Dakther Dusman*

*Jillacho Novro*

*Moja Puthacho Kinkulo*

*Rojik Kazar*

*Avnkwar Mesthrim*

Victor D'Silva mentions two other of his plays which do not have a mention in both SarDesai's as well as D'Costa's books –

*Zuze Dayal*, and

*Macho*.

This takes the list to 25 plays. This is perhaps the highest number plays by any writer in Konkani and a rare one in Indian literatures.

Of these 25 plays *Mankddacho Pai* is an adaptation of W. W. Jacobs' play translated to English by Louis N. Parkar. His *Shirigundi Shimaon* is the adaptation of Shakespeare's controversial play *The Timon of Athens*. Cha. Fra.'s plays which normally have a

classical Greek three –act structure, in *Shirigundi Shimaon* have unusual five-act structures keeping in tune with Shakespeare’s play. The play is a brilliant adaptation.

Besides plays he also wrote numerous poems, some of them published as anthologies, serialised stories, short stories, and numerous articles.

### **Project Report Outline**

Chapter I which is an introduction of the research report introduces the milieu of the works of Cha. Fra. and tries to locate it in the geographical, linguistic, cultural and historical contexts. In order to better understand the location of the concerns of this study, the chapter introduces the origin and history of Konkani Christians, their relationship with the church, their relationship with other religious - linguistic and occupational communities - in relation to hegemonic control and power structures. It then gives a general introduction to Cha. Fra.’s works.

Chapter II deals with literature review. It begins by trying to locate Konkani language and literature in the larger democratic and literary politics of India. It also tries to identify the reasons for the greater emphasis on oral literature and a neglect of the written literature in Konkani. Following this, it looks at various studies on Cha. Fra. and critically comments on them. It then locates the present study and its importance and distinctness.

Chapter III introduces the history of Konkani drama and the specific historical juncture at which Cha. Fra. makes a claim for the Konkani stage. It then presents a brief summary and an analysis of each of the 19 extant plays of Cha. Fra. The chapter also makes an attempt to categorise his plays depending on their structure, style, concerns and themes and draws some broad conclusions on his plays.

Chapter IV is an engagement with Cha. Fra.'s poems. The chapter has attempted an analysis of his available poems and tried to place Cha. Fra. within the Mangalorean Konkani poetry traditions.

Chapter V studies the available prose writings of Cha. Fra., namely, editorials, short stories, and research articles. The chapter maps the socio-political and cultural concerns of Cha. Fra. and makes an evaluation of his prose viz a viz his works in other creative genres.

Chapter VI which is a concluding chapter of the project report tries to give an overview of the analyses in the previous chapters and tries to make a holistic assessment of Cha. Fra.'s works. The chapter also identifies about seven areas for potential research which can take research on Cha. Fra.'s works ahead.



## **CHAPTER II**

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

As mentioned in Chapter I, although the literary output is the highest in Mangalorean Konkani Christian dialect, compared to the other dialects, there has been nearly no research done on them.

### **Locating Konkani Language and Literature**

Since during the struggle to include Konkani in the eighth schedule of the constitution for over three-decades the focus went largely to two areas: one, to construct a long history for Konkani aligning it with nationalist history with an emphasis on its ancientness and ‘glorious’ past; and two to linguistically prove the distinctness of Konkani as a language and not as a dialect of Marathi. Given the position of Konkani vis-a-vis other languages in its environment namely Kannada, Marathi and Hindi, the focus was also to project the oral tradition and social practices as the uniqueness of language and not its literature.

As per the Seventy-First Amendment, Konkani was included in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution of India, on 31 August 1992.

Having achieved the status of language in the eighth schedule of the constitution, the focus should have shifted to developing theory and criticism for Konkani literature.

However, that does not seem to be happening even after sixteen years of the historic event.

However, there have been minor attempts to write biographies of some of the writers with significant literary output, and publication of their works. In Mangalorean Konkani literature the privileged ones have been J. S. Alvares, V.J.P. Saldanha (pen name- Khadap) , Gabriel Vaz (pen name – Gabbu Urva), A. T. Lobo, and C. F. D’ Costa (Cha. Fra.). These five have been known as the Pancha Pandavas of Konkani literature.

Of all these Cha. Fra. has been more popular with his poems and plays. He is also posthumously the most published and written about writer with most of his works published and more articles written on him.

### **Studies on the Works of Cha. Fra.**

Victor D’Silva (D’Silva, 2000: 24-25) says that while Goans saw Cha. Fra. as a poet, the Mangaloreans looked up to him more as a dramatist.

Manohar Rai Saridesai (SarDesai, 2000: 292-293) says:

C.F. D’Souza can be considered as the best playwright Karnataka has ever produced. Through he is equally known as our foremost poet, in the final analysis he emerges a shade better as a playwright than a poet. His plays electrified the Konkani stage in Mangalore and Bombay with new ideas and themes. He saw the tremendous advance made in the Marathi and Gujarati theatre. He was influenced

by it. His dialogues are full of biting satire. Figures of speech and rhymes flow through them in an unending stream. He has written upon themes which other playwrights hesitated to touch. Story, dialogue, language, characterisation and stage craft are given equal importance in his plays. The phrases and idioms he invents in his dialogue are unique to his plays. His plays may be called dramatic poems. They reflect the problems of the Mangalorean Christian community, their life style, tradition and above all a penetrating insight into their psyche .... Fearlessly, he unmasks the hypocrite and the self-complacent and attacks unjust and inhuman religious and social customs and manners. He does not spare the seemingly well-knit Konkani family life either.

In these brief remarks SarDesai perhaps captures all that has been said about Cha. Fra. and his plays. He not only remarks about what Cha. Fra. does to the Konkani theatre of his time, but also the influences on him, his craft, themes of his work and the locations of his critique.

Mauris D'Sa (D'Sa, 2000: 521) claims that Cha. Fra. is foremost among those who brought newness and modernism to Konkani theatre. According to him Cha. Fra. successfully experimented with the changes happening in western and Marathi theatre on Konkani stage. While D' Sa calls *Avnkar Mesthri*, *Jorji Buthel*, *Tornem Tornem Mornem*, and *Sunnem Mazor Hansta* as his most significant plays, he declares *Bhangar Monis* as his best play.

Anil Pinto (Pinto, 2003: 59-63) in agreeing with other scholars that *Bhangar Monis* is one of Cha. Fra.'s best plays draws attention to the subversive nature of the work. He also draws attention to the important features of Cha. Fra.'s plays which also are seen in this work – elements of situational comedy, creation of carnivalesque world in terms of relationships, social stratification, power, and institutions.

In his preface to Stella D'Costa. *Tuje Mhojemodem*, William Robert Da Silva (Da Silva, 2007, 1-15) claims that Mangalorean Konkani has seen only two significant poets – Louis Mascarenhas and Cha. Fra. This credit no doubt adds to the poetic nature of his works. This claim goes well with Bennett Pinto's (Pinto, 2003: 225) declaration that he was a “doyen of Konkani poetry and drama.”

Victor D'Silva (D'Silva, 2000: 24-25) talking about the theatre scene that Cha. Fra. took by storm says, the condition of theatre in Konkani then was deplorable with a “strange” structure. There used to be at least 15-20 scenes, repeated drawing and closing of curtains and as and when curtains were closed there used to be songs imitating Hindi filmy song tunes, 18-20 actors, and to make audience laugh inserting irrelevant characters. According to D'Silva, as against such a sad condition, Cha. Fra. brought to Konkani theatre strong dialogues, figurative language, thematic depth, handling the weight of characters, and intelligence of fitting the entire play in one act or scene which guaranteed Cha. Fra. the place of the greatest Konkani playwright.

He (D'Silva, 2000: 28) also agrees that *Bhangar Monis* is Cha. Fra.'s greatest play. However, quoting Cha. Fra. he says, from the literary perspective Cha. Fra.'s *Tornem Tornem Mornem* is the greatest of his works. This claim is acceptable as the belfry and Morne's clothes become highly symbolic and with the eponymous character never appearing on the stage, yet being present throughout the play.

D'Silva (D'Silva, 2000: 29) states that the play *Zuze Dayal* brings out the philosophical angst that Cha. Fra. had towards society. For him *Tornem Tornem Mornem* brings out the differences in opinion between the vicar and his assistant and their attitude towards ordinary people. He says the following lines of Thambdo Piya from that play stand for Cha. Fra.'s outlook (D'Silva, 2000: 29):

Do not take the name of God; it's the curse of capitalism. It's a mindset created to create fear about the rich and thereby deny the poor people's access to day-to-day living. I will erase everything to the ground and will build a young red world over it.

While it is true that Cha. Fra. had strong leaning towards communism at least in the play he mocks at Thambdo Piya's communist ideology and is quite unsympathetic towards him. D'Silva says the exposition of church on public space through the play made the church ban this play.

According to D'Silva (D'Silva, 2000: 30) Cha. Fra.'s play *Vishenticho Bhav* is a critique of the Christian lay organisation, Society of St Vincent de Paul. The society was started

by Frederick Ozanam in France in 1833. Today, it is an international organization of Roman Catholic lay men and women of all ages, with its primary mission - to help the poor and less fortunate (*Wikipedia*: 2008). The play according D'Silva farcically comments on the Society's work in Mangalore.

Through his *Sunnem Mazor Hansta*, D'Silva (D'Silva, 2000: 31) argues that Cha. Fra. makes a farcical representation of Arch Angel Gabriel wherein Gabriel has stolen a 'lungi' belonging to a moplah because he is tired of wearing and seeing white everywhere.

Cha. Fra's *Shirigundi Shimaon* which is an adaptation of Shakespeare's *Timon of Athens*. For D'Silva (D'Silva, 2000: 31), in the play Cha. Fra. throws critical light on century old Konkani culture, attire, behaviour, rules and regulations, religious as well as historical event. He calls this a great work. It depicts the ways society treats a defeated man, the impact of such a treatment on that man and the consequent response of this man towards the society.

He also claims that there perhaps is no better humorous play than *Jorji Buthel* (D'Silva, 2000: 34), in Konkani.

He (D'Silva, 2000: 35), says that Cha. Fra. not only wrote original plays but also adapted some of the European ones. For his translations/adaptations were unique in that he incorporated the Konkani culture and its legacies.

Melwyn Rodrigues (D'Silva, 2000: 35-36), says:

That people rejected Cha. Fra.'s plays thirty years ago and showered gifts on him recently shows that his plays were ahead of thirty years. He wrote for the future. The difference in the thinking of Cha. Fra. and us is thirty years. One of the important reasons for the reduction in the production of plays in Konkani is Cha. Fra. When people accepted Cha. Fra.'s works other writers got suffocated. When he began to get respect and awards at Kala Sampath other writers became cold. New writers did not have the courage. They should have at least thought they should go up to Cha. Fra.'s level if not surpass it. But they found even that climb difficult.

Edwin Sequeira (D'Silva, 2000: 36) says: Cha. Fra.'s plays are a challenge to the intelligence of a director. Failure is assured even if one misses a word or a mood.

Charles Sequeira (D'Silva, 2000: 36) declares that he learnt to become a good actor thanks to Cha. Fra.' plays. His double edged dialogues are challenging. Unless you practice his plays for at least two months it is difficult perform them.

In the context of Konkani theatre, Gabriel Vaz (D'Silva, 2000: 37) mentions:

There is an understanding that unless you have songs in between, it is difficult to perform plays. But in Cha. Fra.'s plays with minimum characters bound in one knot, delivered poetic lines, the audience brought up on the staple diet of tales of cooks and servants was dumbstruck. He could not savour the humour that struck



like lightning, the words that flowed one after the other like the waves of floods, or the taste of Cha. Fra.'s words. But gradually Cha. Fra. was able to educate them. That is the greatness of Cha. Fra.

Responding to the reception of Cha. Fra.'s plays Eric Ozario writes:

The audience who was so far used to masala productions had a shock. Because these plays are revolutionary, they do not fit into today's moulds, because they criticise, question, mock at conformists, people condemn his plays, praise them, protect them, and sometimes dismiss them. But there is no dispute over the quality of his works, his linguistic scholarship, poetic beauty, intelligently chosen themes, the way he explores those themes, and fun. In my opinion, the contribution of Cha. Fra. to Konkani theatre is huge, unique and incomparable one. The depth and attitude that he gave to Konkani theatre was never there before. He is a king of Konkani plays. A master of words. The reaction to the challenging plays are an honour to Cha. Fra. as it is common nature of the Konkani audience to shout down instead of complimenting, beat them to ground, instead of losing oneself in them.

Stella D'Costa, (D'Costa 2003: 34) wife of Cha. Fra., says,

The kind of consciousness that Cha. Fra. created through his plays like *Jorji Buthel*, *Tornem Tornem Mornem*, *Avnkar Mesthri*, among Konkani language lovers and litterateurs went to enrich the Konkani language as well as Konkani literature.

A study of all these various references to Cha. Fra. and his works shows that all these largely refer to Cha. Fra.'s language, the kind of stage he inherited and made a difference to. But none of these are theoretical inquiries into the works of Cha. Fra. or the reception of them. They are more of observations. Neither do they necessarily provide a textual engagement of Cha. Fra.'s works. They are mostly author-centred narratives. Interestingly, although the studies make sweeping comments as to Cha. Fra. being there is no attempt to compare the previous drama texts in Konkani or the succeeding ones with those of Cha. Fra. The remarks of Victor D'Silva, Melwyn Rodrigues. Gabriel Vaz, Eric Ozario write off the previous Konkani theatre as if there were no significant plays at all. But SarDesai clearly drops names of quite a few playwrights like V.J.P. Saldanha. and A.T. Lobo, who are considered to be amongst some of the best writers. Such a gap calls for a careful reading of write ups either on Cha. Fra. or on his works.

This study, however, is not an attempt to address this gap or critique these studies. This study becomes significant in that it will be the first theoretical engagement with Cha. Fra.'s works.

## **CHAPTER III**

## CHA. FRA.'S PLAYS

### Konkani Drama

There has not been any documentation of the Konkani plays in Canara. The only available but brief account is that of Manohar Rai SarDesai in his *A History of Konkani Literature* (SarDesai, 2000: 291-294). The following details on early Konkani Christian theatre are from SarDesai's work. He says that "the early plays might have been influenced by the English plays staged in St Aloysius College," in "open grounds or in the backyards of rich people." He names Pedru John D'Souza, Pascal Sequeira, and Bonaventure Tauro as prominent playwrights who wrote plays such as *Dhog Sargeant*, *Chood Kotru*, *Navaddik Voiz*, *Toklentlem Suknnem*, *Bal Ales*, *Desh Daivik*, and *Geneveiw*. Louis Mascarenhas' verse play *Abravamchem Yanadan* is not only considered as the magnum opus of the early period but also of the Konkani drama.

Martin P. D'Sa is supposed have written more than 25 plays, mostly religious. His early plays being *Communism*, *Leopoldachim Patkam*, and *Sopnnant Moronn*, later plays being *Somiacho Passiany*, and most popular ones being *Fatimachi Saibinn*, *Kristachem Janan*, *Madtiranchem Jait*, and *Assisicho Seraf*.

S.S. Prabhu, a playwright of the fifties, was known for his plays such as *Doth*, *Naukar*, *Raitak Jait*, *Jodi Tekit Mod*. Fred Fernandes known for his social plays wrote *Bhikari*,

*Balatkar, Vichitr Khuni, and Maim Khilm Assai*. J.B. Rasquinha also a playwright of the fifties wrote *Ishtagat, Apurbaychem Kazar*. D. P. Albuquerque wrote *Astik Lagon Khyast, Gadipar Kello Rakuvar* and *Hany Rai Zallom Zalyar*, and Amchem Daiz.

V.J.P. Saldanha, more as a novelist has to his credit plays like *Sardarnchi Sinol, Kahltiman, Uloitat Ulovndit, Bavanatlo Gulob*, and *Nirmonn*. “His *Tobias* and *Khotavinn Kalliz* were set to music and staged as operas.”

Other prominent playwrights include J. S. Alvares with his *Cheddvacho Hanker Polle, Esthel Teganichi Vhokol, Chedo Ek Cheddvam Sadde Saat*, and *Jezu Nazaren*. J.M.B. Rodrigues and A. T. Lobo also wrote plays during the fifties and later Sunny A. D’Souza but they were staged in Bombay.

Some of the others who wrote plays in Mangalore are Henry D’Silva Udyavar, J.B. Rasquinha, C.G. Sequeira, Claude D’Souza, J.B. Moraes, Lancy Pinto-Naik, Dolphy Cascia, Henry D’ Silva Suratkal, Shri Gabbu,, Beena Ruzai, Mic Max, Wilfi Rebimbus, Rose Karwar Street, Eddie Sequeira and Francis Fernandes.

Although SarDesai does not talk about the themes or concerns of these plays or their reception among the Konkani Christians, based on the titles and social conditions prevalent then we can arrive at some conclusions. Most plays seem to be around stereotyped women, life of Christ or saints, upper class values like self-respect. Some

plays also seem to be responding to nationalism and reformation. My hunch is that the reformation is largely played on the body of women.

SarDesai's claim that St Aloysius College theatre influenced Konkani theatre needs to be reconsidered because there were attempts by the early Jesuits to establish Konkani theatre in the seminary involving the local neo-converts. Even if it did then, it most probably remained as the elite theatre considering SarDesai's own statement that they were performed in the "backyards of rich people."

With St Aloysius College for more than seven decades catering to the educational needs of only the elites of Mangalore, and many churches in the outskirts of Mangalore having separate benches for neo-converts from the lower sections of the society, and education hardly accessible it is doubtful that until the seventies Konkani plays were accessible to all. This, however, changes with the Middle East opening up with well-paying jobs for the semi-skilled and unskilled lower sections of the community. This change makes a huge difference to the social division between the elites and the poor among the Konkani Christians.

My suggestion is that it is this new class of people who make theatre possible in the 1970s and 80s which gradually dies down. This new money that allows sponsorship for plays and watching of plays by buying tickets makes space for theatre, till the early 1990's wherein the televisions now replace theatre as a source of entertainment with much more. The 'Gulf money,' as the money sent by people working in Gulf was

popularly called, also boosted renovation and reconstruction of church buildings, and church administered school buildings. Theatre was used as one of the means of raising money for the construction by tapping the 'Gulf Money'.

However, Cha. Fra. does not seem to be capturing the post-Gulf phenomenon much. His plays involve more with the earlier Bombay phenomenon and the consequent changes in the socio-cultural realm.

Although SarDesai (SarDesai, 2000: 291-294) gives a picture of the formal theatre from the early twentieth century, Victor D'Silva (D'Silva, 2000: 24-25) paints a negative picture of Konkani theatre when Cha. Fra. enters the fray. He says when Cha. Fra. entered Konkani theatre, it had a "strange" structure. There used to be at least 15-20 scenes, repeated drawing and closing of curtains and as and when curtains were closed there used to be songs imitating Hindi filmy song tunes, 18-20 actors, and to make audience laugh inserting irrelevant characters.

My own reading is that Cha. Fra. although writes plays in the classical western theatre tradition, there is no complete rejection of the pre-existing theatre conventions. For example, the old stereotyped characters of church cook, maid servant do not completely break the stereotypes in Cha. Fra.'s Plays. Such characters in *Tharne Tharne Morne*, *Bhangar Monnis*, and *Gorgi Buthel* can be cited as evidence.

He is supposed to have read Shakespeare's plays in stories of Charles Lamb (D'Silva, 2000: 3).

He moved to Bombay in 1948 and worked in the Election Commission for the first general election of independent India. Later he became an employee of B.E.S.T. According to D'Silva (D'Silva, 2000: 3) during this period he became a member of Petit Library and read the works of Moliere, Henrick Ibsen and other canonical writers of Europe.

In 1951 he starts writing for *Painari*, a Konkani periodical, then published by VJP Saldhana, a doyen of Konkani literature. In 1953 for the first time he read his Konkani poem in All India Radio, Bombay in the Konkani section titled 'Swapnantullem Raaz.' This poem made him popular among many a Konkani writer in Bombay and Goa. In 1955 he wrote his first play (SarDesai, 2000: 293) *Sobit Sounsar*. This play received much critical acclaim in Marathi dailies.

His next play *Avnkar Mesthrim* not only got reviews in *Free Press Bulletin* but also toured abroad. The play was also translated and performed in Tulu under the titles *Harishchandra Mastr* and *Satya Panade*.

His *Bhangar Monnis* is considered by many critics as the finest play of Cha. Fra. (D'Silva, 2000: 28). This play saw nearly 22 performances.



In 1969 he returned to Mangalore and staged the plays *Jorji Buthel*, and *Tornem Tornem Mornem*. He married in 1974 and in the same year he became the founder president of Konkani Bhasha Mandal. In 1976 he began a journal called *Jivith*. In 1986 he was honoured as the president of the All India Konkani Writers' Conference in Goa. Around the same time he authored more than 150 songs for Mandd Sobhann, a cultural organisation which today has become one of most well-known Konkani cultural association.

In 1986 he was awarded the prestigious Central Sahitya Akademi Award for his anthology of poems *Sonshyache Kan*. This triggered series of write ups on him in English, Konknaï and Marathi and translation of his works in Malayalam.

In 1990 he was felicitated by the Bishop of Mangalore on behalf of Mangalorean Konkani Christians. He was also awarded the title Konkani Sahitya Kularatna. He passes away in 1992.

Following are the list of 15 plays that SarDesai mentions in his *A History of Konkani Literature*:

*Sobit Sounsar*

*Sunnem Mazor Hansta (One-Act)*

*Tomato (One-Act)*

*Vishenticho Bhav (One-Act)*

*Tornem Tornem Mornem*

*Poinnaranchi Mitr*

*Bhangar Monis*

*Jorji Buthel*

*Mankddacho Pai*

*Magirchem Magir*

*Bokleak Sat Jiv*

*Kuvalyachi Val*

*Handdo Ovla*

*Bonch[o] Bandh*

*Dev Polleit Asa*

Stella' D'Costa's two volumes of edited works of Cha. Fra. which include 19 of his plays also include the following plays which SarDesai's book does not find a mention.

*Doro*

*Them Tho ani Hanv*

*Shirigundi Shimaon*

*Dakther Dusman*

*Jillacho Novro*

*Moja Puthacho Kinkulo*

*Rojik Kazar*

*Avnkar Mesri*

Victor D'Silva mentions two other of his plays which do not have a mention in both SarDesai's as well as D'Costa's books –

*Zuze Dayal*, and

*Macho*.

This takes the list to 25 plays. This is perhaps the highest number plays by any writer in Konkani and a rare one in Indian literatures.

Of these 25 plays *Mankddacho Pai* is an adaptation of W. W. Jacobs' play translated to English by Louis N. Parkar. His *Shirigundi Shimaon* is the adaptation of Shakespeare's controversial play *The Timon of Athens*. Cha. Fra.'s plays which normally have a classical Greek three – act structure, in *Shirigundi Shimaon* have unusual five-act structures keeping in tune with Shakespeare's play. It is a brilliant adaptation.

Of the 24 plays of Cha. Fra., the researcher has been able to locate only 19.

#### Full-length plays

*Avnkar Mesri*

*Avnkar Mesri* is a play about the way society propagates morality through its agents and problematic nature of the propositions of such morality. In the play the bachelor-teacher has been patronising a boy called Avil. The play opens with the boy struggling to reveal his secret love to his mentor - teacher. He manages to tell his mentor that he is in love with a girl whom he met and fell in love with when he had visited Mangalore. In the

mean time, the teacher has invited Assess, the teacher's sister, along with husband Abut and daughter, Alice to come to Bombay. When they arrive at the teacher's place Avil and Alice realise that their families are know to each other. With their arrival, the plot of the play grows. While much of the plot of the play unfolds around Alice's and Avil's attempt to reveal their love to their elders and their conflicting views on how to propose it, the climax leads to multiple revelations. One, the affair of Avil and Alice to all in the house; two, that the teacher is Avil's father, three, the teacher is the same person who had who deserted his pregnant lover i.e. Avil's mother; and four, that the lady whom the teacher has been mentioning is Avil's mother. But to the reader one possible reading is also that preacher's of morality as much have a hollow morality, which when tested against their past would question the very moral basis of their teachings.

The narrative technique of the play is quite impressive. The past narrative time, which is about Avil falling in love in Mangalore and his affair with Alice unfolds through the dialogue between the teacher and Avil and the letters of Alice that are accidentally read by the teacher. The other narrative time of teacher's past, especially his affair with Avil's mother, is created in readers' mind by dropping object clues in different parts of the plays like the picture of a lady that he is fussy about, the photograph that drops from an album at the end of the play, and the questions that other characters raise in the play. But, the construction of the teacher's past is largely left to the imagination of the reader by assembling the various clues left in different parts of this play.

### *Doro*

*Doro* is a play with social critique woven around the sale and consumption of illicit liquor. The play becomes important on the grounds that drunkenness was stereotypically attached to the Christian community in Mangalore. Cha. Fra.'s play brings out through various situations the economy of illicit liquor and what the level to which it makes men stoop.

The protagonist of the play Ulla Crasta is a drunkard. Lilla Crasta is his second wife. Lilla has been making some money by selling snacks to the customers of Allu Fudthad, who has built a wall on Ulla Crasta's land in order to facilitate the sale of liquor. Sila Santhes, a friend of Ulla who is also a drunkard has been eying Lilla. In the beginning of the play Vila Lopez comes to Ulla's house and starts making advances towards Lilla who happens to be his old love in Bombay whom he had deserted. We also come to know that Lilla is Ulla's second wife and that Ulla had murdered his first wife. In the play among all significant characters the only person who does not drink is Ulla's wife Lilla. Ulla's mother Kollu also drinks.

Villa buys Lilla from Ulla for Rs 10,000 in the guise of a social reformer. But his plan to take her to Bombay and presumably sell her for prostitution, gets involved in local rivalry between Allu Fudthad and Lulla Crasta. In his attempt to contain Allu through the police he attracts Allu's revenge which foils his Bombay plans. On the other hand, Kollu's concern for Lilla ends up in she replacing Lilla to go in the auto rickshaw and hence, saved from the trap of Ulla.

The play brings out complete moral bankruptcy on the part of all men. Interestingly, Cha. Fra.'s women in this play have a strong sense of concern and belief in the human which is completely absent in the case of men. The state is also as corrupt as the people as it functions more by the money power than by the law of the land.

### *Tornem Tornem Mornem*

*Tornem Tornem Mornem* is one of Cha. Fra.'s craftily written plays. Incidentally, it is also Cha.Fra's most controversial play which was banned by the Catholic Church in Mangalore. Cha. Fra. has talked about the suffering he had to bear due to their play in many of his articles.

The action of the play takes place in Murnal Church in Mangalore. The play opens with the assistant parish priest of the Murnal Church, Fr Peter, trying to hide Mornem's clothes. At the sight of the Vicar he hides them in the box in the portico of the church. Later, the church administrator, Mona Karval comes to inquire about Mornem with the information that she is hiding in Fr Peter's room. Unable to find her he accuses them of hiding her in the church. In the ensuing action Thurup Johny, an idle person and a drunkard, Mona Karval, Dona Karval who is cheating on his father, Lisamv Lia, Mona's secretary who also cheats Mona, and Vinna Karval, Mona's daughter, all keep searching for Mornem at the church premises. Mona wants Mornem to marry her. Johny wants to take her to Bombay. Since she is presumably hidden in the belfry where Johny has been hidden, they are looking for the key.

Although, Cha. Fra.'s *Bhangar Monis* has been claimed as the best play in terms of craft, the research would suggest that in terms of craft *Tornem Tornem Mornem* is his best.

The eponymous character of the play Mornem who is the central character around which all the action of the play revolves never comes on the stage! Yet, her presence/absence can be felt throughout the play, until she metaphorically completely becomes absent at the end of the play, under the rubble of the church belfry. With the search for key, Mornem takes on the sign of key – a key to everyone's hidden personality – of Fr Peter, the Vicar, Mona, Liya and Donna. Hence, to keep the structure intact with the hidden personality and truth, the key should never be found and so should Mornem, who is the key.

The play of absence and presence is perhaps never so craftily employed not only in Cha. Fra's other works but in all plays Konkani in Mangalore.

### *Shirigundi Shimao*

*Shirigundi Shimao* is an adaptation of Shakespeare's play *Timon of Athens*. *Timon of Athens* is Shakespeare's not only lesser known play but also often referred to as his incomplete play. Its authorship also remains disputed. However, for reasons not known as of now, Cha. Fra. chooses this obscure play of Shakespeare.

Shimao is a wealthy merchant of a place called Murnal. He is extremely generous to all those who come to him, the priests, fellow merchants, his servants and to any guest who comes to his house. Every day is a feast in his house. In the plays there is an alliance for

his daughter from Salu Thavr, the administrator of Murnal Parish. However, his good times come to an end and all friends turn foes including his own family members, with an exception of his faithful clerk Fullu Furthad, when the news of his ships caught in a sea storm reaches the place. While the news that his ships have recovered from the storm changes the attitudes of others towards him to positive, a further rumour that they have sunk, once again distances people from him who now demand their pound of flesh from him. Disgusted and dejected Shimao, escapes to forest, and becomes a misanthrope.

The play falls in Aristotelian description of a tragic hero in that Shimao's fall is a fall of a great hero due to a tragic flaw in him, the hamartia. The hamartia could very well be hubris – pride in his wealth and ability to reach out. We do not find any such larger than life character in other plays of Cha. Fra.

What is interesting is that Cha. Fra. locates this play just before one of the most historical and tragic incidents in the history of Mangalorean Catholic Community which took place, as he says in the beginning of the play, in the mid-nineteenth century. Towards the end of the play Fullu Furthad mentions to Shimao that there is a conflict between Padrovado and Propaganda groups, the former owing their allegiance to the king of Portugal, and the latter to the Pope. This also marks the period when there was an increased interaction between Goa and Mangalore and the control of Mangalore religious affairs largely done from Goa, a trend that stops with the setting up of the seminary in Mangalore by the Jesuits towards the end of nineteenth century.



*Shirigundi Shimao* and *Tornem Tornem Mornem* constitute a critique of the Church as an establishment. In *Shirigundi Shimao* one can see the representation of the priests as those that side with economic capital. They come to dine with Shimao during his good time, will do favours if one is useful, but turn their back when they find him not so useful. The play also represents a time when the church had absolute control over the laity.

The play is also a critique of the interpersonal relations between people which are porous, in that they depend on one's status marked by one's wealth. Hence, a negative portrayal of all those who betray Shimao.

#### *Bhangar Monis*

*Bhangar Monis* has been claimed as one of Cha. Fra.'s best plays in terms of his craft. The play is set in Bombay. Janna, who is called Bhangar Monis or an ideal man, lives with his wife, Inna, and has a maid called Mary. The family has been relocated from Mangalore to Bangalore. Janna is a well-known person and a social worker in his place. Into this family enters Monna, an old lover of Inna, both of whom had lost contact after Inna got married to Janna. Monna, is a drunkard whom in a distant past, Janna had helped. Inna had also financially helped him. Now he is back once again, with hardly any changes. He is drunk, he is hungry and still claims to have respect for Janna and love towards Inna. The plot of the play develops and creates extremely farcical situations with both Inna and Mary trying to hide Monna from Janna, and Janna searching for him with the help of his neighbours. In the process we come to know about the gap between Janna and Inna in their married life and their attitudes towards each other and others.

The play is a satire on marriage as a coming together of two individuals. The play goes on to challenge social and biblical understanding of marriage and role of husband and wife in marriage.

### *Dev Polleit Asa*

*Dev Polleit Asa* is another of Cha. Fra.'s historical plays. The historical location of the play is the eighteenth century, as he puts it in the beginning of his play, 'a hundred years from the time of exodus from Goa'. (D'Costa, 2005)

Lores Naik is a tenant of Anna Mary Sardin, a rich landlord. Monna Bhot is Lores Naik's his friend who saves from many of the traps that Niku Bhot lays. Niku Bhot is Anna Mary Sardin's employee.

Niku Bhot has an eye on Lores Naik's growing wealth and he not only wants to pull him down but also wants to steal his wealth through Izbel, his employer's niece. The early part of the play deals with the various ways in which Niku Bhot tries to get Izbel married to Lores Naik and how Monna Bhot foils his attempts. However, these attempts take a new turn with the entry of Vithor Shet. With Vithor's entry the play takes newer dimensions. Vithor is a growing merchant, mainly involved in timber sale business. Soon after his entry into the scene, Izbel and Lores get married, much against the wishes of Monna Bhot. After the marriage Niku Bhot blackmails Izbel to hand over the pot which has Lores' hidden wealth. In order to escape from him Izbel seeks the help of Vithor

Shet. Vithor Shet promises to help her but on the grounds that she hand over Lores' pot to him which he would return with interest in a year's time.

Although Vithor does not save her but Monna Bhot, he hands over the pot to Vithor who from that money buys the house and land which was rented out to Lores by Anna Mary Sardin. When Lores comes to know about it from Monna, it breaks his heart and in an attempt of revenge, he tries to burn his house that has now been taken over by Vithor. Angry Vithor gets him beaten up and throws him out. Izbel becomes insane. The chorus repeats the lines it inaugurated the play with which also reflects the title "God is watching but what is lost to me..."

The play can be read and understood at various levels. At one level it is a strong critique of religion as an ideology which makes allowance for the violence perpetrated on the have-nots by the haves with the promise of a better life after death. At other level it is the story of unfailing friendship. It can also be read as the story of the success of evil over goodness – whereby the play becomes a pessimist one.

But the most tragic reading is if one tries to read the play in the context of Portuguese occupation of Goa. One might remember that the Portuguese entered Goa after the Goud Sarawat Brahmins sought the help of Portuguese to contain the Adilshahis. But after containing the Adilshahis, the Portuguese not only took hold of Goa, but completely changed its landscape – the people lost their claim over the land just as Lores did. *Dev Polleit Asa* thereby becomes the metaphor for the Portuguese occupation of Goa and the

consequent loss of claim over their land and fruits of their labour on the part of Konkani people.

### *Boncho Band*

*Boncho Band* is a one-act play about interpersonal communication. This is one of Cha. Fra.'s rare plays where the stage setting shifts between two locations. Most of his plays have single location setting.

Two sisters Elsi Minin and Felsi Minin, both spinisters who have been dejected, as there have been no marriage proposals coming forth, take their bitterness on each other, which results in their not talking. This upsets their uncle - father's brother - who has been looking after them ever since their parents passed away. He assigns the task of making them speak to Dr Willy Cosma who is his god-daughter's husband. Dr Cosma has been quite jobless with hardly any patients coming to him. Dr Comsa accepts the assignment. Dr Cosma does succeed in making Zuze's nieces speak and so does Zuze succeed in making Pavlet and Dr Cosma, who also have not been in talking terms, speak. But the play ends with both the pairs not talking again at the end of the play.

The play is an interesting commentary on the interpersonal relationships between siblings, and husband and wife. The social for him perhaps does not function. The sheer fragile nature of relationships gets exemplified in this play.

*Dakther Dusman*

*Dakther Dusman* is a translation of Henrik Ibsen's Play *An Enemy of the People*. It is a play about a socially conscious person who fights for the welfare of the general public at the cost of his own wellbeing and that of his family. Unlike most of Cha. Fra.'s plays this is one play where there are working relationships. The family although is a little shaken is able to stick together at the end of the play. Father-daughter relationship is one of the rare depictions in Cha. Fra. in this play. Another deviation from Cha. Fra.'s normal setting is that the play has multiple settings.

Murnal town is on its way to becoming a major health resort thanks to its new municipal baths. In anticipation of an influx of tourists in the coming summer season, property values are rising, business is picking up, and unemployment is decreasing.

At the modest home of Dr Roshoman Shiker an idealistic physician, the spa and its benefits make for lively conversation between Mayor Pedru Shiker, the brother of Dr Roshoman and Gustin Gosal, editor of the local newspaper, both of whom arrived for a visit just after the Dr Roshoman finished supper. With Gustin is an assistant named Billis. Dr Roshoman is out for a walk with his sons, Ejlif and Morten.

During the interaction Gustin mentions that he plans to run an article about the health resort—written by Dr Roshoman, the medical director of the baths—in the spring, the right time to generate interest in the new community asset. The doctor, who came up with the idea for the baths, has been an untiring promoter of their potential benefits.

Pedru reminds Gustin that he, as mayor, played a “modest” part (really meaning the most important part) in making the baths a reality. It was the mayor’s practicality and business sense, he hints, that were the driving forces behind the project.

When Dr Roshoman returns from his walk with Captain Sother, a seafarer, he is in a cheerful mood. Everything is going right for him and his family, he says, and he now has enough money to afford a few little luxuries, like the roast beef they had for dinner. When the mayor inquires about the article his brother wrote, Dr Roshoman says he has decided to withhold it for the time being, but does not say why. Suspecting that his brother is keeping something from him—possibly something about the spa—the mayor accuses the doctor of withholding important information.

After Mayor Pedru leaves, Dr Roshoman’s daughter, Petra, a schoolteacher, arrives and joins in the conversation. An idealist like her father, Petra says, “There is so much falsehood both at home and at school. At home one must not speak, and at school we have to stand and tell lies to the children.” Captain Suther offers to provide a room for the school in an old house he owns.

Dr Roshoman then opens a letter he received, then waves it before Gustin and his wife, announcing a remarkable discovery: The baths are contaminated. The doctor speaks in a triumphant, jubilant tone, for he believes he has done a great service for the public welfare. He says several cases of typhoid fever and gastric fever the previous year aroused his suspicion about the spa water, so he took samples of it and sent them to a

Bombay for analysis. The letter he holds contains the results of the analysis: The spa is a cesspool of disease. It seems that tanneries in the town leached impurities into the water. Gustin – seemingly idealistic, like Dr Roshoman - promises to publish news of the discovery.

In the days immediately following the discovery, Mayor Pedru discovers it will cost an enormous sum in tax dollars to make improvements, including laying new pipes to handle the leachate, which his brother says are necessary to eliminate the pollution. So, he decides to challenge his brother's findings as faulty and asks him to renounce them. The doctor—viewing himself as the guardian of the common weal, a savior—refuses.

Meanwhile, Gustin fearing the wrath of the taxpayers, decides not to publish Dr Roshoman's article. At a town meeting in a large room provided as a goodwill gesture by Captain Sother, almost everyone lines up against Dr Roshoman –Mayor Pedru, Gustin, Alsu, ordinary citizens—and shout him down when he attempts to explain the problem and alert the town to the danger. One citizen wonders whether he has an alcohol problem. Another suggests insanity runs in his family. Still another thinks he is getting even for not receiving a salary increase as the spa's medical director. All agree that he should be labelled “an enemy of the people,” one bent on destroying the town. When Dr Roshoman and his family leave the meeting, the crowd hisses and boos, then begins chanting “enemy of the people,” “enemy of the people.”

The next morning, Dr Roshoman and his family discovers broken windows, and rocks littering the floor. The doctor piles the rocks on a table, saying he will save them as heirlooms for his children. A letter arrives in which the landlord gives Dr Roshoman notice of eviction. It does not matter, Dr Roshoman tells his wife, for he and his family will cross the sea and resettle in the New World. Then, Captain Sother arrives and announces his employer has fired him. The mayor enters and announces that the citizens are circulating a petition pledging that they will no longer seek the medical services of Dr Roshoman. The mayor advises his brother to leave town for a while, then return and confess his error in writing. Such a move might earn him reinstatement as medical director of the spa. Dr Roshoman says he will never admit that he was wrong under any circumstances.

After the mayor leaves, another visitor arrives. He is Modthin Keerl, the father of Dr Roshoman's wife, Kathrine, is the owner of polluting tanneries. In his will, he had stipulated that a handsome sum be bequeathed to Katherine and the Dr Roshoman's children. However, he tells the doctor that he invested the bequest in stock in the tanneries. Furthermore, he is going around town buying up all the remaining stock in the tanneries. Thus, if Dr Roshoman sticks to his story—that is, if he refuses to recant—the stock will become worthless and his wife and children will inherit nothing. Modthin tells the doctor that he has until 2 p.m. to change his position.

When Modthin leaves, Gustin and Alsu arrive. They think Dr Roshoman is involved in a scheme to inflate the value of the stocks and want in on the scheme. But, Dr Roshoman



dismisses them, raising an umbrella as if to strike them. They hurry out. Captain Sother invites Dr Roshoman and his family to board at his house during the winter. The doctor expresses his gratitude, then says he will focus his medical practice on the poor and educate his children himself. In fact, he says, he will start a school of his own to teach the town's guttersnipes. He is feeling upbeat, cheerful as he looks ahead.

"I am the strongest man in this town," he says.

Then he announces he has made another important discovery. Gathering everyone close to him, he says "The strongest man in the world is he who stands alone."

This is the only play where Cha. Fra. discusses modern-day governance that is largely absent in most of his plays. A slight reference does occur in *Shirigundi Shimao*, though.

This is also one of his plays which ends in a hope where the suffering protagonist has not given up, and is optimistic. The play ends in an optimistic way.

### *Magirchem Magir*

*Magirchem Magir* is a distinct play in Cha. Fra. where the action of the play takes place between heaven and earth. The play brings together the Indian theatrical traditions too, the concept of conductor or 'suthradar', for, the archangel calls himself 'suthradar' of the play. However, the concept of the suthradar is not well developed in that in most classical

plays the suthradar at least enters at the end again. Here, he completely disappears after the opening of the first scene.

In the beginning of the play there is an argument between arch angel Michael and Peter who in Christian mythology is the one who has the keys of heaven, regarding a particular person called Bannu Thesao, whom Peter has created with a heart full of love and with skilled hands, because, Peter hopes that love is the most powerful weapon which can transform the world. Gabriel disagrees saying thanks to Peter's experiment to Bannu constantly finds himself in trouble. Bannu is known in his village near Mangalore for theft. Anything that goes missing in the village is normally ascribed Bannu. Bannu is supposed to have stolen a book, later he 'steals' Helen teacher's purse from her tightly worn blouse, he is accused of stealing ash pumpkin from his neighbours fields. However, Bannu constantly denies the charges of theft and gives the reasons as taken instead of stolen, or picked things to due to a bet but returned thereafter and so on. The play also conveys that it is not a theft at all, in that Bannu does not have any intention of causing misery to anybody or he does not steal things in order to possess but owing to contexts to disprove people's claim over things. Inas accuses Bannu of stealing Inna's ornaments, and complaints of the same to his mother, Ernic Thesao. This accusation becomes the last staw on Ernics's patience who urges Bannu to leave the village and go to Bombay and work. Bajil, Bannu's friend comes to her aid and leaves for Bombay along with Bannu. In the absence of Bannu, Inas, Izbel's brother, along with his would be brother-in-law Roland, takes Ernic's signature and buys her land for a pittance and promising to take care of her. But, they neither pay her the promised money nor look after her as promised.

When Bajil comes to know about the way Ernic has been treated, he hatches a plot to teach a lesson to Inas and Roland. He sends a telegram to Ernic saying that Bannu died in a road accident. Ernic going by the telegram performs the last rites of her son. Soon after these developments, Bannu and Bajil quietly come down to the village and start scaring people. When the workers sight Bannu in his house which they have come to demolish they think its his ghost. In the mean time hearing that Roland is coming to that place Bajil prepares a plan to kill Roland in his car by rolling a huge bolder, much against Bannu's wish. While the car gets severly damaged, Roland comes out unscathed. The play ends with Bannu doing away with Roland's gold which he had brought down.

Bannu does not follow any logic of the normal. He does not accept any of the worldview of his mother – that one should fall in love with people of their own or lower social status - hence he falls in love with Bula and tries to woo her; he has had sexual encounter with Bula which is again going against the norms, he does not allow his mother to pledge her gold by snapping it from her without her knowledge; he does not agree with Bajil and his mother to kill Roland. He only snipes Roland's things which anyway truly belonged to him. He does not work and is happy living idle.

Although it looks like a farcical play, it raises profound questions about the norms that govern our everyday understanding, an important characteristics of plays – to critique the ordinary - to show the absurdity of norms. Theft is not theft, things people own are not natural to them, much of ownership is done through force.

In Roland, the play has a critique of the neo rich, especially, of those that have become rich from their gulf money.

It is surprising that this is the only play where Cha. Fra. has a character who is from gulf. In most plays his characters do not go beyond Bombay.

### *Jorji Buthel*

*Jorji Buthel* is one of the most humorous plays of Cha. Fra. mostly due to its dialogues and actions. In terms of its plot it comes very close to *Bhangar Monis*. In both the plays there is a family of three - husband, wife and servant girl and with an entry of the third person or party the play takes newer turns. Although Jorji Buthel and Rekel have children, they do not appear on stage in the play.

Jorji Buthel, owns an oil mill. Although he is a very hardworking man his wife isn't who comes from an elite estate owner's family is not. She seems to be having a affair with Eddi Michel whom she was supposed to get married to but the proposal was called off as both his parents suffered from insanity.

The presence of his in-laws in his house who have been looking down upon their son-in-law, and Eddi Michel's over presence in Jorji's house during his absence, causes much strife for Jorji. He suspects Rekel, his wife, of infidelity. But he does not have hard evidence. At the same time he has a deep love for her and cannot think of living alone

without her. Hence, every time Rekel succeeds in threatening him of leaving the house he is able to persuade her to stay back.

The play is one of growth of Jorji. In order to be accepted by Rekel, Jorji has to change and grow. Most important change that she is able to bring about is that of his attire which he changes, second is the attitude towards Rekel which is less of suspicion and more of trust which she does.

### *Sunnem Mazor Hansta*

*Sunnem Mazor Hansta* is another interesting play by Cha. Fra. which is also a play of growth where Prof. Igidore Inashio Morello, a retired scientist learns to accept the family through a supernatural intervention. It is a play with a clear social message unlike most of Cha. Fra.'s plays which are more of dramatisation of issues rather than message oriented. It is one of those non-pessimistic plays of Cha. Fra.

Prof. Igidore Inashio Morello a world renowned scientist after being away in different lands has come back retired to live with the family which has grown without having him around. In the meantime other than looking after the financial needs of the family, he has blissfully forgotten the other family commitments, namely, love and emotive concern towards his family, looking into children's academic and personal growth, emotional companionship for his wife. As a result the family has grown to manage on its own. The children have done extremely badly at their studies, as his wife

Prof. Morello has come home after retirement and is feeling out place. In twenty years of marriage he has stayed with his wife for only for fourteen months and fourteen days. He does not know exactly in which class his daughter is studying in, he keeps mispronouncing his wife's name, and he often gets irritated by his wife. Now, he has decided to sleep in the open at night

There, at night, archangel Gabriel meets Prof. Morello and informs him that God has been happy with his work in the area of acoustics and has granted him the ability to understand the language of animals. But that ability comes with a rider to merely enjoy the new ability but not to evaluate and act on the knowledge or information that he gains. However, when he hears from Kitty and Kitta, their pet cat and pet dog, about his wife's affair with the neighbour and his daughter's with his neighbour's son, he forgets the rider that the angel had given him, gets warned initially and finally is killed by Archangel Gabriel. With Gabriel striking him, he wakes up and realises that the whole episode was a dream. What follows is the concern of his family members towards him, a clear antidote to his attitude towards them in the dream.

Through his *Sunnem Mazor Hansta*, D'Silva (D'Silva, 2000: 31) argues that Cha. Fra. makes a farcical representation of Arch Angel Gabriel wherein Gabriel has stolen a 'lungi' belonging to a moplal because he is tired of wearing and seeing white everywhere.

The world that is presented in this play is a topsy-turvy one, in which Gabriel is lost in the world since his last visit, and is unable to comprehend the changes since then; he has human tendencies of boredom, anger; Prof. Morello can understand animal language, the world of God and the world of the human interact; God is pleased with human intellectual achievement; with all his wisdom and achievement in acoustics but Prof. Morello is not able to understand humans and human communication - a fact that is hinted at by Archangel Gabriel. As always, comedies involving such topsy-turvy world, also happen to be the most scathing commentaries of the society they are writing in, so is *Sunnem Mazor Hansta*.

*Vishenticho Bhav* is a satire on the activities of the Society of St Vincent de Paul, a characteristic that D'Silva (D'Silva, 2000: 30) also points at. The play according D'Silva farcically comments on the Society's work in Mangalore. The researcher wishes to add that it also is a critique of the appropriation of the Society's activities by the people.

The Society was started by Frederick Ozanam in France in 1833. Today it is an international organization of Roman Catholic lay men and women of all ages, with its primary mission - to help the poor and less fortunate (*Wikipedia*, 2008).

Vishenth, was a worker in a tile factory but due to illness does not go to work and depends on the aid he gets from the Society of St Vincent de Paul. He does not enjoy a good relation with his mother, brothers or family members. His daughter and son are hardly contributing to the family, with his son involved with gambling. He does not want

to take care of his old and sick mother. Neither do his brothers wish to take care of her. The small hut that their mother was staying in was destroyed in the rain. Hence, the members of the Society of St Vincent de Paul, requested Vishenth to give shelter to her and promised to hand over the two and a half kilograms of rice to Vishenth. But, Vishenth picks a fight with her within a few days and drives her to his brothers' houses, who in turn also show the door to her. She complains about it to Society of St Vincent de Paul. Two of the members of the Society, Robert and Hubert, visit Vishenth to clarify on the issue and to request him to take care of her. In the mean time Vishenth's two other brothers, Pedru and Paulu, come with a mat claiming that their mother is dead and someone has to do the funeral and that they would do it only if Vishenth parts with the gold of their mother which is in his custody. While each shifts his responsibility of giving her a burial unless they get a share of her jewels and bank money, their mother arrives. It becomes clear that having heard that she was going away to her sister's house, the two younger brothers had planned this to get her money and gold from Vishenth. In the process it also becomes clear for Robert and Hubert that she is not all that poor as she claims to be and they suggest withdrawal of aid to her, as she is healthy enough to travel but does not come to mass.

The stand of them holding faith as carrot to give aid to others is critiqued so is the faith itself, as an arrangement of people for survival, not that they are really religious about. It is surprising the way Cha. Fra. is able to penetrate into the lowest section of the catholic community in Mangalore.



### *Mankddacho Pai*

*Mankddacho Pai* is a translation of a play adaptation by Lois N. Parker of W. W. Jacob's short story *Monkey's Paw* written in 1901. In the literary world this play has been very popular in many languages with translations and adaptations. In Konkani this is the only known translation. It is evident that Cha. Fra. has translated this story more for its literary popularity and as an experiment in Karnataka.

The story opens at the home of the Zuvam Mothez, which consists of him, his wife Luviza Mothez and their grown up son, Inaz, who works as an electrician in a factory. As the family is involved in their pep talk, Maurice Kernel, Luviza's brother, an ex army person and a bachelor, enters. During the conversation Zuvam brings up the fact that he told him of a 'monkey's paw.' Maurice seems reluctant to tell his audience of the paw, but does anyway. Luviza is disgusted by the paw, because of its appearance, but Inaz is interested in the mummified paw. Maurice tells them the story of the fakir, and seems disturbed by their interest when they ask him whether he has wished. His wishes must have turned out badly, as he throws the paw on the fire. Luviza rescues it. Maurice bids them to be sensible and pitch the paw on the fire, and if they must wish, to wish for something reasonable, and the Mothez family forget for a while about the paw while he entertains him with other tales.

Once Maurice leaves, they remember the paw. The Mothezes do not really believe him, and think that his earnest warning about the paw is just superstition. Herbert jokingly tells his father to wish to be emperor. Zuvam wishes for Rs 3000. The paw twists in his hand,

but they are convinced it is just in his imagination. Ianza goes to work. Zuvam in the meantime is once again terrified as he sees a monkey dancing in the fire.

The next morning, as the Mothezes are worried about their son's delay in returning, they receive a post with bank documents for pledging the house. A little later they see a man dressed in factory uniform dawdling by the gate. Eventually, he comes in and tells them about the death of their son in an accident in the factory and gives them a compensation of Rs 3000.

Six days after his death the Mothezes are grief stricken. Luviza asks her husband to wish Inaz back to life. He is very reluctant, but does, and when Inaz comes knocking, he knows his wife cannot let him in. He wishes his third and last wish, that Inaz is dead again.

### *Jillache Novre*

*Jillache Novre* is another of Cha. Fra.'s one-act plays which deals with a transgressive relationship which is largely alien to Konkani literary imagination.

Jilla is a daughter of a maidservant whom her employer, Kasmir Torus, marries after the death of his second wife. However, when he comes to know that his son by his first wife is in love with her, he moves from Mangalore to a distant village called Naravi, bordering a forest which he owns, and runs the timber business.

The story of the play unfolds at Naravi where he is lying sick in his bed and trying to manage his business through his young wife. But his wife is visibly unhappy with this lonely place and longs for company of people. She joins the woodcutters in singing songs which irritates her husband. Much of the dialogue that happens there is a dramatisation of the savoured relationship between the old husband and his young wife. As the verbal insult between the two develops, Kasmir's son Vitti enters the house and asks Jilla to leave with him. Jilla refuses to come with him on the grounds of his status as a pauper and fearing social ostracisation. When Vitti drags her to leave, Kasmir gathers all his strength, takes the gun and shoots Vitti dead and also succumbs to death.

This play has a portrayal of a very rational woman which is missing in most of Cha. Fra.'s plays.

### *Kuvalyachi Val*

This is a play about notions of ownership and about notions of shallow morality especially in boy-girl relationships.

Vallu, protagonist of the play, is a tenant of Pavlin Bai. He has planted an ash pumpkin plant in the compound with the permission of Pavlin Bai. Vallu finds out that the creeper has gone over the roof of neighbouring tenant, Avlin Bai, and has an ash gourd inside the neighbour's roof. When Vallu goes to remove the pumpkin, Jilli, Avlin Bai's daughter, screams. The scream attracts Jilli's mother and his landlady. They take Vallu to task who is now convinced that Avlin and Jilli have deliberately put the ash gourd inside the roof.

Later, when Avlin and Pavlin have gone away, Vallu tries to get into Jilli's house with her permission to fix the tiles and remove the ash pumpkin. In the conversation that Jilli and Vallu have, Jilli who is in love with Vallu, cannot bear when Vallu says that he loves ash pumpkin more than her and cuts the creeper and removes the pumpkin. This enrages Vallu who now gets into the house. When Jilly screams it attracts Avlin and the landlady. The landlady, enraged by the developments cuts the creeper. Vallu goes up the roof and Jilly gives him the ash pumpkin.

The humorous play brings about the attitude of people to relationships between young people.

#### *Moja Puthacho Kinkulo*

The one-act play is a theatre adaptation of J M Menezes' short story. The play is a comedy based on the misunderstanding caused by circumstances.

Rony, an eleven year old son of Gustin has been busy trying to locate Kimberly in the map of Africa. Pavlam, the head of their ward comes to him who on his way to post the letter has forgotten to post the letter of his son. He leaves the letter in the house asking Rony to post it.

A little later, Rony's mother, Ellu, comes to the house, followed by his father, Gustin. In no time a fight ensues between them over feeding their son. As the verbal duel progresses Gustin notices the letter on the table and presumes it to be of Ellu. He accuses him of

infidelity. At the same time Ellu notices the photo of a girl on the table which had fallen off from the letter and accuses Gustin of extra-marital affairs.

During their fight the parish priest enters and Ellu threatens to leave the house. The confusion is cleared with the entry of Pavlam who clarifies that it is a letter written by his son to his girl friend and the photo is that of the girl.

### *Tomato*

Maid servants, mostly employed as cooks, abound in Cha. Fra.'s play. But the one-act play *Tomato* specifically deals with the ill treatment of the maid servants.

Maxi Texera, a rich sick old man has had a long married life with Merci. She is talkative and dominates her husband. She keeps a tab on both what her husbands eats or does, considering his health as well as his relationship with Merchem Luvis, their domestic help. When Merchem is eating a tomato, without the knowledge of Merci, Merci calls her as she has found some tomatoes missing in the stock. Merchem in a hurry gobbles a part of the tamato she was eating and hides the rest of it in Maxi's, coat pocket. Merci, in a fit of anger hits her with a bottle and Merchem collapses. Worried, Merci calls her friend Monna, the police inspector at the local police station, for help. During the conversation when she sees Merci blinking her eyes, Merci realises that Merchem is not dead and drops the phone. She threatens Merchem not to tell about the incident to anyone. As Merchem struggles to stand on her feet, her father Forco Luvis enters the house and is shocked to see his daughter in such a condition. He rushes to the dispensery of Dr Paris

Kamath and brings him. When they reach home to treat Merchem, they cannot find her as she has been hidden by Merci. A little later, after attempts to digress the issue fail, Dr Kamath finds Merchem hidden under a basket and treats her. He asks Merchem's father to take her away from Merci's house, as they cannot be trusted with her life any more. As they leave, Merci admits to her husband that she was the one who hit Merchem.

The play effectively brings out the lack of guilt involved in the violence unleashed by the employers on their domestic help. Merci's only worry is, if she is dead. The desire and pain of Merchem has no impact on her. The play is also a scathing attack on the haves of Mangalore Christian community who are commonly accused of ill-treating their domestic helps.

### *Handdo Otila*

*Handdo Otila* explores the human weakness towards wealth, irrespective of one's existing amount of wealth or lack of it.

The play unfolds at a fictitious church called Nayimadi. The church is looked after by an old Capuchin priest called Fr Gustin. He has a lay assistant called Appu. His sister Alli, also resides in the same church and works as a teacher. The play opens with Fr Gustin sharing a dream he had the previous night with Appu. Appu interprets the dream saying that Fr Gustin is going to get some wealth, accidentally. True to that one Vithor Vishenth Veigas, a lawyer from Mangalore, comes to him and discloses that his uncle Gasper Melchior Balthazar has died leaving a will bequeathing his wealth of 30 acres of coffee

estate and Rupees one lakh to a very self respecting man who does not hanker after wealth. This creates a competition among Appu, Fr Gustin, Alli teacher and Kernel, a retired army man, for the wealth. Kernel who initially presents himself as a self-respecting man, also succumbs to the desire. During the drama that ensues, we find Alli who was in love with Kernel much against her brother's wishes, now switching her love to Appu, in order to lay claims for the wealth and Appu turning out to be far smarter than he came across thus far. Finally, in a strage development, Appu manages to lay claims to the 10 acres of land and Rs one lakh. Of course, he also gets Alli to be his would-be wife.

The play is a comedy that brings out human frailties in the presence of wealth, with strange justifications for the desire of wealth which brings about changes in long-lasting relationships.

#### *Them Tho ani Hanv*

*Them Tho and Han* is a theatre adaptation of Eddi Siker, a Konkani writer's short story. This play has least number of characters of all Cha. Fra.'s plays – four: a writer, a girl who is engaged to a young man in gulf, the young man whom she is engaged to, and a boy who delivers milk.

The writer in the play is a very poor man who is unable to pay his rent or has any money to buy his food. The girl who has some unknown concern towards the writer is in love with a man whom she has some grudge againt. Hence, she asks the writer to make character of her lover in his story. In return, she promises to pay his rent. On the other

hand, her lover, not knowing that the girl has met him, meets him and lures him to make a character of his girl friend in his stories. Both of them give the writer the presents they had given to each other. The writer writes a story making characters of both of them in the story. This enrages both of them who come to him to threaten him. During this time, the writer pretends as if he does not know them, as per their individual prior requests, but, pays them with the same coin by giving the presents of each to the other and asking them to open them in front of him. As they open the present, they are forced to confront each other's hypocrisy.

Apart from the humour, the play gives profound insights about writing. At one point the writer in the play talks about characterisation. He says "the writers claim that they create characters out of nothing, and out of imagination. But later they place one person's hair from arm pits on someone else's lips and call it mush."

### **Categorising Cha. Fra.'s Plays**

It is extremely difficult to categorise his plays as they do not clearly follow any classical model of plays. For example, none of his plays will strictly be tragedies, because, they are not about the fall of great people, nor do they create pity and fear, as Aristotle describes a tragedy in his *Poetics*. None of them are larger than life characters. The only exception to this would be his adaption of Shakespearean play *Timon of Athens* – a play which almost closely adheres to Aristotelian propositions of tragedy. Most of the plays overlap in their categories.



Following is an attempt to categorise his extant plays.

### Adaptations from English

Cha. Fra. has adapted three plays from English to Konkani. However, he does not translate them but adopts them to situations here, in different time periods and historical contexts. The names are approximated to those of the land leaving aside their anglicised versions and adapting them to the way they are called in rural Konkani. Some situations are left out. E.g. in *Mankddacho Pai*, father and son do not play chess but drink. In the same play the ten days between the death of the son and parents' attempt to resurrect him, are reduced to seven days to build the local post-burial ritual into the play.

*Shirigundi Shimao*, is an adaptation of Shakespeare's *Timon of Athens*. It is not clear as to why Cha. Fra. chooses this obscure play of Cha. Fra., about the date of which Shakespearean scholars have serious disagreements. Some consider it to be his first play, where as, some others, his last play. Most of them agree that it is an incomplete play. This play was published posthumously in 1623 in the First Folio. Cha. Fra. adapts it to Konkani and sets it in mid-nineteenth century Mangalore.

*Dakther Dusman* is an adaptation of Henrik Ibsen's play *An Enemy of the People*. The play was written by Ibsen in Norwegian in 1882. Since then, the play has been adapted or translated to many languages and including cinema. In India, Satyajit Ray adapted the play to film in Bengali with the title *Ganashatru* in 1989.

*Mankddacho Pai*, is an adaptation to play a horror story by W.W. Jacobs in England in 1902 by Louis N. Parker. This is also a very famous play adapted or translated to many languages of the world.

#### Adaptations from Konkani Short Stories

*Moja Puthacho Kinkulo*, is based on a short story of J M Minezes. *Them Tho ani Hanv* is based on Eddie Siker's short story. The researcher has not been able to lay his hands on these short stories.

#### Comedies

The following plays can be clearly called comedies as they adhere to the characteristics of comedy genre in the western canon: *Sunnem Mazor Hansta*, *Them Tho ani Hanv*, *Bonch[o] Band*, *Magirchem Magir*, *Handdo Ota*, *Jorji Buthel*, *Vishenticho Bhav*, *Kuvalyachi Val*, *Avnkar Mesthrim*, and *Moja Puthacho Kinkulo*.

#### Tragedies

These can broadly be considered as tragedies - *Tornem Tornem Mornem*, *Dev Polleit Asa*, *Tomato*, *Doro*, *Mankddacho Pai*, *Shirigundi Shimao*

#### Musical

*Rojik Kazar*, is a musical play of Cha. Fra., a rare experiment in Konkani.

### One-Act Plays

*Them Tho ani Hanv, Tomato, Mankddacho Pai, Vishenticho Bhav, Kuvalyachi Val, and Moja Puthacho Kinkulo, Jillacho Novre,* are his one-act plays.

### Historical Plays

*Dev Polleit Asa* and *Shirigundi Shimao* can be labelled as historical plays as they locate themselves in distant past in some crucial historical junctures which were of great consequence to the Konkani people. While the former is set in the mid-eighteenth century in the context of inquisition, the latter is set in the mid-nineteenth century which tore the community into two fractions based on allegiance to Pope or the king of Portugal.

Based on the location of his plays can be categorised as Bombay plays and Mangalore plays. While *Bhangar Monis* and *Avnkwat Mesthrim* can be termed Bombay plays, as they are set in Bombay the rest of the plays can be called the Mangalore plays. The cultural location of the actions in the plays also makes quite a few things possible for the characters. Bombay, for example, is a city where anonymity allows one to explore oneself and one's aspiration which may not have space in Mangalore and which is not only a small place but also rural.

### Difficult to Categorise

The following plays of Cha. Fra. are difficult to categorise : *Bhangar Monis, Dakther Dusman,*

### Unavailable Plays

Since the text of the flowing plays is not available it is difficult to categorise the following plays : *Sobit Sounsar*, *Poinnarancho Mit*, and *Bokleak Sat Jiv*

### **Themes in Cha. Fra.'s Plays**

As Cha. Fra. has written more than twenty plays, his plays touch upon a wide variety of themes. Following is an attempt to capture some of them.

#### Relationships in Cha. Fra.'s plays

The relationships he deals with are largely intimate ones. Much of his plots unfold at the failure of relationships. He seems to be strongly referring to the incompatibility of relations in almost all his plays. *Bhangar Monis*, and *Jorji Buthel*, are specifically about husband-wife relationships. But *Dakther Dusman* also talks about failed husband-wife relationships. In fact, in no play of his do husband-wife enjoy a cordial relationship.

The other relationships he handles are those of master-servant, employer-domestic help, bosom friends, and so on.

The relationship between parents and children does not become an important aspect of dramatisation or analysis in his plays, with an exception of *Mankddacho Pai* and *Dakther Dusman*. While the father-daughter relationship in *Dakther Dusman*, is a rare one of love and trust, so is the one in *Mankddacho Pai*. However, one must notice that both are adaptations.

Perhaps the only relationship that seems to be possible is the male-male relationship, of bosom friends. Bannu and Bajil, in *Magirchem Magir* Shimao and his Fullu Fudthad in *Shrigundi Shimao* are indications of this. In both the cases, they trust each other and have a great affection for each other as well. They do not mind risking their lives for the sake of the other.

Transgressing relationships are common in his plays: The imagined relationship of Sreemathi Ayona and Izabella Morello with their neighbours in *Sunnem Mazor Hansta*; Inna and Monna in *Bhangar Monis*, Izbel and Bannu in *Magirchem Magir*, Rekel and Eddi Michel in *Jorji Buthel*, Mesthri and Avil's Mother in *Aynkwar Mesthri*, Mornem and Karval in *Tornem Tornem Mornem*, Fr Peter and Monem in *Tornem Tornem Mornem*, are some of the prominent relationships of transgression in Cha. Fra.

Forbidden relations are also dealt with in Cha. Fra's plays. Pawlet Cosma and Zuze Minin in *Boncho Band*, Jilla and Vitti in *Jillache Novre* are some of the examples of this. However, they are more suggestive in nature. All the same, the recent scholarship shows how forbidden relationships are dealt more suggestively and in terms of denial in much of media.

If Cha. Fra. wants to defy relationships then why read his plays? One of the answers to this could be found in Levi-Strauss' *Structural Analysis of Oedipus Rex*, wherein he states that the purpose of both myth and drama is to exaggerate and not to solve the problem they posit – a statement that resound mimesis.

### Play of Absence and Presence

Hiding in Cha. Fra.'s play, of people and things, plays a crucial role in the development of plot. It is a sort of *dues ex machine* which allows the development of the plot. People and things are hidden and their search constitutes important aspect of the development of action. In *Avnkwat Mesthrim*, all the characters hide something or the other - letters, love, past actions, mistakes; in *Tornem Tornem Mornem*, Mornem is constantly hidden by everybody, either physically, or their actions with her; in the same play hiding of key, clothes become important metaphors; gold chain, truth in *Doro*, Monna and Inna and Monna's past affair in *Bhangar Monis*, truth from people in *Dakther Dusman*, truth and things in *Magirchem Magir*, Roji in *Jorji Buthel*, and so on. The absence of character during the action of the play pushes for the search of what is hidden as well as metaphorically the truth of characters. For audience, it also gives the superior feeling as they are the only privy to the presence of the absence, especially in the case of hiding of people and things. This gives the notion of omniscience to the audience or the reader. The absence of a character for the other characters on the stage is a curious and paradoxical presence for the audience.

### Wealth and Social Control

All the characters especially female ones in Cha. Fra.'s play are conscious of wealth and social control. Wealth is an important determiner of relationships. Alli shifts her love to Appu, the cook, in *Hando Ota*, in *Jillacho Novro* Jilla does not go with her lover because he is pauper and afraid of society, Inna in *Bhangar Monis* does not go after Monna, because he is poor and marries Janna. Shimao's sister-in-law comes back to him and

wants to be his wife because Shimao is rich again in *Shirigundi Shimao*. Female characters clearly know their priority over their physical or emotional desires – that financial security is crucial for their survival. In this sense they are clearly adhering to the social norms that teach that financial security is important for them as they do not have economic independence in the patriarchal system.

### **Time in his Plays**

Most of Cha. Fra.'s plays happen within a day, thereby adhering to Aristotelian unities of time, place and action.

### Cha. Fra. as a Misanthrope

Most of the characters in his plays distrust other characters. Almost all plays end up except perhaps for *Sune Mazar Hastha* in negative tones, irrespective of whether they are comedies or tragedies. There is a general pessimism that is seen pervading in all his plays.

This, however, is in contrast to his prose which, while launching a scathing attack on various practices and systems in society, is full of hope.

### **Setting of Cha. Fra.'s plays**

Most of Cha. Fra.'s plays happen in houses with a single setting in which the plays unfold. Why do Cha. Fra.'s plays do that? What does such a technique allow Cha. Fra. to do with his characters and language? One outcome perhaps is that he is able to make the

language and plot intense, as the capturing of the audience is to be done through language and not done through too many actions. While this is quite a challenge for any season writer, this also allows him to make his plays psychological. The physical immobility of scenes becomes the possibility of mental engagement.

The only plays where actions shift are *Shirigundi Shimao* and *Dakther Dusman*. While the former has two settings, with most of the play happening at Shimao's house, and the last scene taking place at a cave in jungle, the latter has three places where the action takes place – Dr Roshoman's house, Petnoli Press, Captain Sother's Veranda and Dr Roshoman's half burnt house.

### **Looking for Literariness in Cha. Fra.**

What makes literature, has been much disputed from notions of literature as mimesis to literature and 'systematic violence against language' by the Russian formalists to Eagleton's view that literature is merely a mode through which certain social groups exercise and continue to dominate other social groups.

But if we go by the romantic notion of literature, that is, that which defies the normal or if we take the post-structuralist understanding of literature as that which allows multiple significations, then we have plenty to look for in Cha. Fra.'s plays. The success of Cha. Fra.'s plays lies precisely in the fact that they allow multiple signification to happen and thereby prove subversive to everything. However, if one is to look for the normal in Cha. Fra.'s plays, then one will constantly be discouraged by Cha. Fra.'s reading of the



plays. Every plays is about defying of the norm-al. Be it husband-wife relationships, sibling relationships, friendships, business relationships, priest and laity relationships, there is only discord. Yet, there is no one character that Cha. Fra. wants you to sympathise with in most of his plays. Most plays allow diametrically opposite reading to happen, for example, did Fr Peter and the parish priest have an affair with or fascination for Mornem? Was the parish priest in *Tornem Tornem Mornem* only hiding Mornem's clothes or was he deriving some secret pleasure from them? Cha. Fra. would allow these, and many more meanings to emerge. In Derrida's sense this allows infinite signification to happen. The plays of Cha. Fra., by denying binary, allow a play of multiple meanings to happen. They therefore are the plays of the audience and not of the author.

#### Psychoanalysis and Cha. Fra.

In his essay, 'Creative Writers and Day Dreaming,' Freud argues that creative writers are also a sort of day-dreamers who realise their fantasies which are denied an open play, through their creative works. They not only layer their fantasies but also allow the audience to realise the fantasies while engaging in their creative works.

This argument can be extended to Cha. Fra.'s plays, in that his creative works primarily engage with that which is denied expression in normal life – hence an attack on husband-wife relationships, other human relationships, representation of clergy in their most fallible state, transgressed relationships such as incest.

Since these also happen to be the fantasies that audience and readers want to engage with, Cha. Fra.'s plays strike a deep chord with the audience.

According to Freud if a literary work is also reflection of author's everyday struggle with life, then we again have evidence for the incompatible marriage relationships that Cha. Fra. wants to constantly represent. It is now commonly known that Cha. Fra. did not enjoy a good married life. It was a difficult marriage that he and Stella, his wife, led. Perhaps this is one reason why we find that no marriages are functional marriages, one of coming together of hearts, in his plays.

### **Imaginary Landscape in Cha. Fra.**

Cha. Fra. has hardly set any of his plays in the familiar place. His places are fictitious. The names themselves suggest impossibility of the existence of such places in Mangalore – for example, Naimadi Church in *Hando Otle*, or Murnal church or place in : *Tornem Tornem Mornem*, *Shirigundi Shimao*, and *Dakther Dusman*.

The distancing we know through Derrida is actually close. Distancing allows two possibilities for Cha. Fra., one, he can thus pass off his plays as figments of imagination and escape from charges of defamation, second, allow audience disarm themselves and thereby completely surrender themselves to him, to be led by the gentle hand of the playwright.

With Murnal, one can almost see an attempt on the part of Cha. Fra to create a fictitious place like that of Narayan's Malgudi or Hardy's Wessex or William Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha. However, it is limited to only three of his prominent plays *Tornem Tornem Mornem*, *Shirigundi Shimao*, and *Dakther Dusman*. Cha. Fra. does not clearly evolve this place like Narayan or Hardy or Faulkner. Only in one play does he call it a town - *Dakther Dusman* – and give reference to neighbouring places. This shows the inconsistency of the use of this place in his three works. Perhaps Cha. Fra. was evolving it in these works.

It might be useful to find out when and why does Cha. Fra. start creating this fixed fictitious place.

### **Characters and Characterisation in Cha. Fra.'s Plays**

Characters of Cha. Fra.'s plays come from varied walks of life but are Konkani Christians. Although, Konkani Christians co-exist with other communities in Mangalore they do not come as characters on stage. This limits the world view or weltanschauung to that of Konkani Christians alone. It, in another way, also points out at the closed nature of the community, at least when it comes to the question of literary cultural productions.

Cha. Fra.'s characters come from varied occupational background and also from all power-structures. They include priests, teachers, scientists, lovers, estranged lovers, writers, smugglers, small town industrialists, ex-soldiers, entrepreneurs, estate owners, quazi religious social workers, carpenters, daily wage workers, cooks, and housewives. One interestingly also notices that Cha. Fra.'s characters do not include government

servants, despite Cha. Fra. himself having been a government employee in two organisations in Bombay. There are also no characters who work with modern machinery, like drivers, or printers. There are however, those that work in the Gulf countries but their profession is unknown, much like the condition in reality where people never really bothered about what kind of work one did in the Gulf, except that they worked in the Gulf.

One also notices that Cha. Fra. does not have characters from the elite families of Mangalore who are English educated and move in only specific circles. His rich are those in rural parishes where there are normally only one or two significantly rich parishioners. One can also see the absence of ‘working women’ in the sense of working in offices or factories.

This could be perhaps because Cha. Fra. never seriously encountered this class. Hence, their absence. Similarly, the absence of government employees also could be because not many Konkani Christians took up this profession. However, this could also be read as Cha. Fra.’s interest in representing only certain types of people with certain qualities. Absence of ‘working women’ could be led to the fact that until recently it was quite uncommon to find working women except as teachers. These absences could also be because it’s only recently that a large section of the Konkani Christian community got exposed to formal education. However, the various characters mentioned above exhaust all the people that one will encounter among the Konkani Christians.

The characters he represents are all of flesh and blood. None of the characters are presented in black and white. It is even difficult to determine the narrative stand of the

author in terms of what characters he approves. Anyone trying to find a link between author's lived ideology, his own life with his character is sure to meet with failure. For Cha. Fra. at least here is quite elusive.

One prominent thing that one finds in his plays is that he has given voice to all characters. All characters defend their positions. All are given a strong, metaphoric and figurative language most of the time bordering on rudeness.

While he criticises the characters who constitute old centres of power, like the estate owners, and priests, he does not give any lee way to the newer sections which make claim to the dominance of their ideology like the communists, activists, or feminists. All are empathised and critiqued.

Physical objects also become objects of representation, of psyche, or institution. In *Bhangar Monis* and *Thornem Thornem Mornem*, the clothes become important motifs and symbols. Especially in the latter they take different dimension of hidden desires of sexuality, incest, hollowness of priestocracy, confused ideology etc. Clothes are an important symbol and motif in Cha. Fra.'s *Them Tho ani Hanv*, of distrust, overvaluing and undervaluing of emotions, pretension even in a man-woman relationship.

In *Thornem Thornem Mornem*, the church belfry becomes a symbol for the church, crumbling one at that. Sarcastically, what the priest thinks it required to rejuvenate is money and not anything else. The fact that Fr Peter uses that place to hide Mornem becomes symbolic of church hiding its sexuality within it and later burying all its sins there.

If we apply E. M. Forster's theory of flat and round characters, one realises that most of Cha. Fra.'s characters are flat characters. Very few are round characters like Jorji in *Jorji Buthel*, who show certain moral growth as well as that of personality as the play progresses.

### The Gulf Characters

Cha. Fra. seems to be having an aversion to gulf-returned characters in his plays. Eddi Michel in *Jorji Buthel* and Roland in *Magirchem Magir* are examples of this. They have been portrayed as a little rootless, exploitative, immoral portrayed negatively as they speak Konkani with the mix of English which the playwright strongly disapproves.

## **CHAPTER IV**

## CHA. FRA.'S POETRY

Cha. Fra. is the only poet writing in Kannada script to win the prestigious Central Sahitya Akademi award (1988) and he won it for his anthology of poetry –*Sonshayche Kan* (Rabbit's Ears). According to Sardesai, "Varied in form and content they bear the unmistakable stamp of C. F. D'Costa's genius: his sense of rhythm, his boldly original imagery, his verbal economy, his keen observation of life and things around him and above all, his sensitivity."

William Da Silva, in his introduction to *Tuje Mhojemodem*, an anthology of poems by Stella D'Costa, mentions that Konkani has seen only two poets – Louis Mascarenhas, and Cha. Fra. D'Costa. In the same book he divides the period of Konkani poetry into three – First, the period of Louis Mascarenhas, the second, that of Manohar Rai Sardesai, and the third, modern period. He puts Cha. Fra's poetry in the third period.

About the themes of Cha. Fra's poetry Manohar Rai Sardesai in his *A History of Konkani Literature* (2000) says, "Varied in form and content they bear the unmistakable stamp of C. F. D'Costa's genius: his sense of rhythm, his boldly original imagery, his verbal economy, his keen observation of life and things around him and above all, his sensitivity."



On his poetry SarDesai quotes Cha. Fra. saying, “Human senses are not the same as nature provided them. Processes of evolution have degenerated them to their present state .... The auditory faculty alone has withstood the ravages of evolution. Being human it may be faint, feeble and failing. But it bravely suffers the loneliness essential to raise the vibrations of creativity. When eyes were blind in the unborn life, when the nose was numb and could not distinguish fragrance or stink, when the taste was dormant or the stifled touch could feel next to nothing the ears alone in (sic) alone in the prison of mother’s womb, could hear the silent smiles of the father outside.”

“His poetry is in that respect symbolic, more suggestive and evocative than explanatory. Both in the case of vocabulary or ideas he does not follow the beaten path. To the unwary reader he offers a sudden wealth of words and ideas never heard before.”

SarDesai says, “C. F. D’Costa’s poetry is an appealing yet disturbing commentary on life. He is not a pessimist but we discern both in his plays and his poetry a certain bitterness born of dissatisfaction with the sorry state of life, of men in general and Konkanis in particular. In that sense he is a committed writier: “I am a Konkani poet. They felicitate me, they all weep over my body before I am dead. They offer me no lunch, no dinner, I enjoy no prestige in a voice that can be heard and has to be heard – compelling, convincing, not a hesitating murmur.”

“His poetry is both description of nature and exploration of the nature of man, and at times attains to universal heights. His poem “fatigue” is an example. In a few rapidly

drawn word pictures he cites the example of a person whose fatigue is born of a desire unfulfilled while others easily satisfy it.

Apart from appreciating his humour SarDesai identifies that Cha. Fra.'s poems "not merely communicate a thought but a state of mind" which poses a formidable challenge for translation. "the sound of the syllabus, the ideas associated with words and impact of words on words, all these are a challenge to the translator committed not merely to translate but to transcend limitations of his craft."

"It is a poetry that is happily not divorced from life; it is a poetry that is not stifled by the noose of words. This poetry is not a versified prose but a language that is carefully distilled to suit the special nature of poetry makes demands on the memory of the writer and his intelligence. It is not easy to understand his poetry unless one has thoroughly mastered not only the Konkani Lexicon but all its wealth of idioms and proverbs."

Victor D'Silva says that after the broadcast of his first poem 'Sopnanthulem Raz' in Goa, Cha. Fra. grew steadily as a poet with the help of Vishnu Naik and Wilfred Barboza. (D'Silva: 2000, 6). D'Silva says Cha. Fra. taught Mangaloreans what poetry is. His poetry flows easily both in terms of style and language, proper diction, simple vocabulary, coining of newer words, metric choices, makes Cha. Fra. stand out.

His poetry is a virtual goldmine of words. They not only refer to the life- style, and environment but also of the rural folk. They reflect his rich perception of the world.

He quotes Nagesh Karmali who says Cha. Fra. is the only literary link between Goa and Mangalore ever since the expedition.

Referring to his *Sosyache Kaan*, Cha. Fra. says the poet takes the reader to diverse worlds. In this world there is agony, passion, anger, curse, and he stands amongst his people in different climates. He does not divorce from his roots. But, at the same time does not mind uprooting the practices that are inimical to the community. He is a born rebel.

Willy Da Silva, in his introduction to *Sosyache Kaan* says that Cha. Fra.'s thinking wanders in many directions without boundaries, and as his words get formed on the page the poetry emerges. Love in his poetry is not shy. Sometimes he is disappointed in his love. Cha. Fra. is the only one amongst Mangalorean poets who sees god in the human's eyes, who speaks to God in human terms, who fights with him. Such an engagement with God has made him unpopular with the priests and other religious people. Because of this Cha. Fra. is the only non-traditional poet among the Mangaloreans.

According to Melwyn Rodrigues, Cha. Fra. created every poem on the foundation of new thinking. Hence, they approach differently to different readers.

Following is an attempt to read Cha. Fra.'s poetry in different themes.

## **Use of Nature**

One of the dominant themes in his poetry is the nature. The nature is both destructive and creative. 'Pavs', 'Pavshile Vorvi', 'Pavs Ashetham', 'Gulobachoi Thali', 'Had Chedva Budkulo', 'Mita Kan', 'Somsaraha Mathyar', 'Une Une Dista', 'Kal sangjecha vadalar', and 'Kelyachem Rudan' are some of the examples of this. 'Pavs' engages with the incessant rain that is characteristic of the West coast which fills the wells, ushers in agricultural activity but also brings down houses, spoils roads and spreads cholera, and jaundice.

The nature also gives him a framework to raise fundamental questions about human nature, as in 'Mita Kan' which has gone to the sea rendering the cooked rice tasteless. In 'Une Une Dista' while he dwells on the essence of things that gives identity to objects like sound of ocean, shyness of a girl, the fat of a pork, heat of abole flower, he leads it to ask questions about the essence of human nature. He asks when a man kisses a girl if she does not close her eyes, or her cheeks do not blush has the relationship not lost its essence?

Of all the seasons Cha. Fra. seems to be most fascinated with the rainy season. Of the poems that the researcher has studied to for this work he has not come across any other season that Cha. Fra. has spoken about. Even the poems written around Christmas, new-year do not engage with the climate that accompanies these seasons. That at one level draws our attention to the natural climate of Mangalore which is predominantly sultry

when it does not rain. Or rather, there is only one pleasant season, rainy, just as it was summer for the English poets.

### **Treatment of Women**

Although women abound in his poetry, Cha. Fra.'s treatment of women is quite problematic. There are hardly any women-centred poems. In many poems he uses them to merely make his point or express his frustration. They are hardly given agency but seen more as those that are unable to break from the systems of the society. Women are mostly passive in his poetry, they do not speak. 'Had Chedva Budkulo', 'Thisro Shakuni', 'Unem Unem Dista', 'Kalu Bulu Chali', 'Sado', 'Baye Bhujem Kaliz Khaim', 'Baylamchim Shinknam' are examples of this. They are clearly bearers of the culture, with references to their involvement in acts like fetching water, giving meaning to the land being integral part of the unique landscape, which however is not the case for man, producing eatables, etc. However, while he denies agency to them he does not degrade them or explicitly demean them.

### **Cultural Ethos**

The cultural aspect of the Mangalorean community abounds in his plays. This includes relationships, terminologies of relationships, food habits, dos and don'ts, power hierarchies, seasons, man-woman relationships, landscape and so on. For example, in the poem 'Has Has', within 20 lines constituting five stanzas he clearly brings about seven relationships and the power equations among those relationships in terms what could be expected of these relationships. In that poem he refers to father-in-law, mother-in-law,

sister's husband, brother's wife, father's sister, mother's sister, and wife. In 'Pavshili Vorvi' he speaks about various culinary preparations that are specific to rainy season namely mango pickle, lemon pickle, and collection of spices. In the same poem he also talks about the kind of agricultural activity that happens with the rainy season, the kind of agricultural implements used, and the kind of precautions one should take for the season ahead. 'Sheyo Rose' is another of the poem that talks of another special dish of the region. 'Maink Sangunaka' is another of the poem that deals with mother-daughter relationship.

'Amcha Ksethrantholo Abhyarthi' is a distinct poem that brings the national-political into the community. This is the only poem that talks beyond the typical inner concerns of the community. The poem however, is a satire on the political leaders.

Relationship with the church, its ministers, and practices is another area of the cultural that he explores, mostly to criticise it and disapprove its overarching power, and mindless rituals. It will be discussed below under separate head.

The belief system of the people is another area that Cha. Fra.'s poetry engages with. The belief system is complex and at one level also speaks about the nuanced relationship it has with practices and belief system of other religions and with one's own. 'Angovn' offers an interesting insight into the way the Mangaloreans have engaged with the practices of other communities. In the poem the father who is waiting tensed outside delivery room of his wife, unable to stand the pain of his wife, starts promising offerings

gods and spirits of all religions known to him. He promises a sheep to the mosque and cock to the temple; a copper baby to St Antony, and candles made of honeycomb wax to Mother of Perpetual Succor; a pig to Panjurli, and mango to Karkal church.

‘Dev and Devnsar’ is another of his poem which perhaps is an indication of pre-conversion practices of the community which believed in both benevolent and inimical powers. The poem advises to treat both God and the devil equally.

### **Religion – A Critical Engagement**

In none of his poems is Cha. Fra. positive about religion, its practices and the priestly class. His poems offer a scathing critique of the religion. Most open rejection of the priestly class comes in the poem ‘Adhik Vikal Prani’ which compares the priest to a cobra and terms the priest as the most poisonous one. The poet in the poem having encountered a snake and a priest has killed the priest. The poem also brings out the people’s reaction to the killing which is more of a product of fear of the unknown consequences of the act rather than the moral or ethical stand. Perhaps no poem or creative writing in Konkani has likened a priest to a cobra.

In ‘Dev Ani Devsar’ he rejects the Christian theology of the Catholic Church which calls for the shunning of the devil and glorifies God. Contrary to the teachings of the Church, he advises that people give equal consideration to both the God and the Devil. The stand however, although new in Konkani literature, the common practice in rural areas has

been that during extreme conditions the people have been known to turn to appeasing spirits of the various Hindu cults in the regions.

‘Ghanti Kithyak Vaztath’ satirises the practices of ringing the bell in the church. The poem which is in a dialogic mode, asks the ringer of the bell the meaning of different ways of ringing the bell. He then mocks at the way people blindly believe in the communication through the bell, which has overshadowed the reasoning of the people.

‘Adavn Bapan Kellem’, has postcolonial overtones of the biblical reading. The poem humorously asks what Adam ate, and he lists the names of a series of local fruits that he might have eaten. He also mentions the names non-native fruits like Apples, cherries. One can read the postcolonial challenges to the received version of the Garden of Eden story and an attempt to appropriate the story in the local terms while problematising it.

‘Kumsar’ is a poem that challenges the theoretical assumptions behind confession. It tacitly accuses the clergy of destroying the innocence of young minds and of planting the so called evil in the minds of the children.

‘Kelyachi Kanth’ laments the likening of banana to a penis. The poet seems to be sad that banana is used as a euphemism for penis to talk of taboos related to penis which he thinks has denied him the chance to look at the banana in its own terms. The poem is highly critical of religion which has thus destroyed the normal ways of knowing and making meaning of the world.



### **The Unacknowledged Legislator**

Quite a few of Cha. Fra.'s poems echo Percy Bussy Shelly's claim that poets are the unacknowledged legislatures of the world. Cha. Fra. in quite a few of his poems gives practical tips to lead life normally. Most of such poems that give advice to leading a meaningful life are small normally one or of two stanzas. 'Dev Ani Devsar' asks people to treat God and Devil equally, 'Kani Jini' asks the reader to maintain restraint in everything and lead a moderate life. 'Has' asks people to live life happily. 'Bhangar and Ragath' explores the strange and evil relationship between gold and blood suggesting that avarice of gold has always had bloody consequences.

It can be concluded that it is in his poetry that Cha. Fra. achieves utmost critical sense, challenging many power structures, and practices. He also best displays the culture of the region than any of his other creative works.

## **CHAPTER V**

## CHA. FRA.'S PROSE

Victor D'Silva (2000) identifies a number of prose writings of Cha. Fra. under different genres. Cha. Fra. was a journalist, and ran many periodicals. As a result he ended up writing short stories, editorials, serialised stories, answers to readers' questions on varied issues, articles, research articles, and creating many aphorisms in Konkani. The researcher has not been able to track his serialised stories which go back to as early as 1954. Hence, this chapter will largely concentrate on a few of his short stories, editorials and other such prose writings.

### Serialised Stories

Victor D'Silva (D'Silva: 2000, 62) mentions that Cha. Fra. published his first serialised story in 1954 in *Poinari* periodical on the life of St Christopher under the pen name, Poinaryancho Mithr. He also mentions of another serialised story entitled *Mellem* on exorcism which is disproved using psychology. *Laz* in *Zaag Maag* periodical, *Saimbachem Pathak* and *Wate Wayli Val*, *Volachi Maryad*, and *Fula* in *Painari*, are the serialise stories of Cha. Fra. he makes a mention of.

However, Cha. Fra. has not been known among Mangaloreans for his novels or long stories. ManoharRai SarDesai does not make any mention of his Cha. Fra. name in the list of Mangalorean novelists in his *A History of Konkani Literature*.

## Short Stories

‘Adanv Ani Ev’ in ‘Vishal Konkan’, ‘Dev Paleth Asa’ and ‘Sansnacho Vishev’ for *Udev*, ‘Kolscho’, ‘Amchem Phula’, for *Jivith* are the short stories of Cha. Fra. that D’Silva lists and says they are among about 30 of his stories.

The researcher has been able to track eleven of his short stories: ‘Thap’, ‘Sam Menthachem Achareym’, ‘Kolso’, ‘Maysurchi Daya’, ‘Dhakte Duveger’, ‘Hotelanthlem Hall’, ‘Chimto’, ‘Morem Padlo,’ ‘Kando’, ‘Varem Zod’, ‘Vidhov Chali’, and ‘Volachi Maryad’.

Of all his stories the only story that clearly stands out in terms of its craft and structure is ‘Kolso.’ The rest of the stories clearly indicate that short stories are not his forte. Perhaps for the same reason Manohar Rai SarDesai (SarDesai: 2001, 266) makes only a passing mention of Cha. Fra.’s name amongst Mangalorean short story writers in his *A History of Konkani Literature*.

## Prose

Cha. Fra. began to write articles, and short stories in 1951 for *Poinari*. In 1956 he became the editor of *Zag-Mag*. In 1959 he became the editor of *Poinari*, a position he held for the next three years. In 1962 he started his own periodical called *Vishal Konkan*. In 1969 he came to Mangalore and started *Udev*. In 1983 he began *Jivith*. In all he was the editor of five periodicals – perhaps this remains as the unbeaten record in Konkani journalism. He

started four different periodicals and was their founder editor and was an editor, of one prominent and legendary periodical.

It was in these periodicals that Cha. Fra. wrote almost all his articles, short stories, editorials and other journalistic genre write ups.

His articles encompass varied themes and issues. Some of the predominant issues in his prose are Konkani language, the attitude of Mangaloreans to Konkani, attitude of clergy and city dwellers to Konkani, the distance between Goans and Mangaloreans, the attitude of Goans to Konkani, mindless religious practices, politics among various Konkani organisations, problems haunting our education system, and the country.

In most of his writings he bitterly speaks about the attitude of Konkani people to their language. In ‘Amche Bhashechi Deswat’ which is one of his long and well-researched write up, he makes a historical analysis of Konkani and attributes its present decline to the lethargy of its own speakers. The article displays his keen sense of history, a clear idea of linguistic politics, and a distinct understanding of postcoloniality.

‘Bhadyacha Gharanth Ravthelyanchi Kalethi’ criticises the code mixing that Konkani speakder do. He calls the mixing of mostly English words and also of other local languages namely Kannada and Tulu into the language as a “bastard” state of Konkani. ‘Konkani Manshank Ulo’ critiques the teaching of English in the schools and the meaninglessness of the whole exercise.

‘Barpancho Sonsar’, ‘Amchem Barpi Kurvathat’, express a serious concern over the dwindling interest in the writers for qualitative writing. The second article even warns that the metaphors are waning in Konkani.

‘Konkani Barpyachi Kharas’ makes an analysis of writers, writing and publication in Konkani. He dwells on the commendable work done by A. T. Lobo, Khadap and the like. He also presents his own personal tragedies as a writer and publisher.

Although a number of articles keeps referring to what ails Konkani organisations and organisation of Konkani events, ‘Dekanathlem Deklem Avoi’ makes a special mention of these in his commentary on the seventh all India Konkani Writers’ Conference held in Goa.

‘Usthun Salam Palam’ is an interesting article which attempts a diagnosis of ailments of Konkani. In it he identifies four different ailments. First, the weakness of poetry. The reason for this he finds in the non-publication of poems by the editors of periodicals. As a result, he feels, the link between the poets of previous generation and that of ours has disappeared. Second, the weakness of plays. Here, he finds fault with the entire community. If non-availability of resources is one reason, the rejection of any radical thinking in plays seems to be the other reason. Third, weakness of literature. For this he blames the politics of patronage among the bodies concerned. Fourth, and the last one, is weakness of collective work which he says is the curse of the community.

‘Parishede Vishim Amchim Chinthnam’ is a reflection on the Konkani Parishad. The article is a reflection on Konkani language on its 45th year of existence. Cha. Fra. takes stock of its achievements and failures considering its original vision.

‘Samajinth Alwalle Gumtagar’, ‘Konkani Padam’, ‘Gayan Samsar’ are three articles which dwell on music in Mangalore, both traditional and modern. ‘Samajinth Alwalle Gumtagar’ is about the traditional musical instrument of Konkani folk lore – gumat. The article begins with a reference to Jokim Pereira of Bijai and how his family started and has maintained the tradition. Then the article introduces to the art and craft of gumat to the readers with a reference to the types of beats. The article ends with a reference to the causes for the waning of gumat in the community. The article is quite well-researched and written.

‘Konkani Padam’ is another well-researched rare article which maps the history of Konkani songs. This article in one sense takes off from where ‘Samajinth Alwalle Gumtagar’ ends. The article begins with the waning of the gumat in the Konkani community. Then it moves on to exploring with a tinge of sadness the coming of western music into the community due to various socio-political reasons. He recognises the role played by various institutions in this regard, namely, St Aloysius College. He then does an assessment of all the leading audio cassette singers, Wilfy, Jerome D’Souza, and Eric Ozario, to name a few.

The last of the three articles, ‘Gayan Samsar’ draws our attention to historical origins many music traditions in Mangalore.

‘Kordelak Naman’ is an article that stands out amongst all the others of Cha. Fra. The article traces the contribution of Fr Alexander Duba to Cordel parish. This is one of the rarest articles where he has traced the contribution of a priest to the community and admired his commitment. This stands out because in one of his plays or poems he has been positive about either individual priests or the priestly class.

‘Akkal Nathllo Nilakkal Vaad’ deals with the controversy over a cross that was allegedly found in Nilakkal in Kerala. Cha. Fra. while mocking at the religious divide that has emerged between the two communities due to this, clearly argues for the prevalence of human nature beyond the controversies of religion. Cha. Fra.’s contempt towards religion and manipulation of people’s emotions based on religion is evident in the article.

His write up ‘Purshanv’ is highly critical of the open display religion and of road shows that various religions engage in. He condemns the public display of religious practices, which put so many people to inconvenience.

‘Igarz and Mashid’ dwells on the controversy over the construction of Masjid near Milagris Church in Mangalore city. Here too, he does not become partisan but asks for amicable settlement of issues.



‘Nagdem Nathal’ is a critique of Christmas celebration and a reflection on the contrasting events during the birth of Christ. He contrasts the way priests treat the faithful, with the way Christ took care of his people, and the concern and kindness Jesus displayed.

‘Jesu Morana’, ‘Khursachem Varas’, ‘Pornem, Santh Tharnem Zathath’, and ‘Phirgazanthlem Jivith’ are the other articles where he reflects over many of the Christian practices and critiques those that are meaningless or exploitative in nature.

‘Az Fest Phalyam Khyast’, ‘Az Kaal Pargat Parkshani Nakkal’, ‘Bafe Lunch’, ‘Bharathiyamcho Swabhav’, ‘Samaz Sudharan’, ‘Shel Zallyan Naak Kapnaye’, ‘Shikpacha Samsaranth Chadpade’, ‘Ho savkas zavcho Jivghath ya Khuni?’, ‘1960 Isenth Samsar Aker Karuyam’, ‘Amcho Dispodtho Bred’, and ‘Molam Kashim Vadthath?’ deal largely with issues concerning the general socio-political condition in India. These articles do not necessarily deal with issues pertaining to Mangalorean community but have a civic approach to issues concerning the public. In some articles like ‘Bafe Lunch’, there is a lamentation over the changing style which is rejecting the old inter-personal communication possibilities. Other articles deal with issues like social reform, education and inflation.

Cha. Fra.’s prose shows the breath of his intellectual and emotional engagements. From his concerns he clearly emerges as a humanist who is able to transcend beyond his community, religion and received knowledge. What one cannot but appreciate in his prose is his unrelenting concern for the oppressed, the marginalised, the downtrodden, the

weak, and the helpless. While there is concern for the language his conception of language is that which brings all the speakers of that language on equal and common platform rising beyond the regional, religious, and local.

## CHAPTER VI

## CONCLUSION

Cha. Fra. is one of the rarest towering personalities in the Konkani literary scene. There is perhaps no one in Konkani who has achieved so much in such a varied fields as plays, poetry, lyrics, and journalism. What is important to note is that Cha. Fra. is perhaps the only one who became close to the masses, who moved with them, and who actively took up their causes. While most writers were largely arm chair writers, Cha. Fra. became a writer-activist, a brand that has become famous today but much looked down upon then.

He was a writer with enormous courage. As a result he had to endure repeated rejection from almost all the centres of power within the society – the clergy, publishers, owners of public spaces, established writers, and the whole of Mangalorean community. Like the proverbial prophet, Cha. Fra. could not get much acceptance and recognition in his native place, although he was much appreciated, praised and respected in Goa and Bombay among many scholars, and activists.

One sees that the different genres allow Cha. Fra. to explore different concerns about different segments of society. The poetry of Cha. Fra. does not rise beyond his community. Although there is plenty of universality in his poetry there is less engagement with the modern institutions of the state or civilised society. His poetry is clearly rooted in his Mangalorean Konkani community. It revolves round Mangalorean people, their habits, shortcoming, problems, the climate they live in, the seasons they

engage with and the power centres that they negotiate. His poetry is quite optimistic in nature. Presentness marks his poetry. There is less of past or future time engagement in his poetry. It includes an element of both the Romantic and the Modernist elements.

On the other hand, his prose engages with the community's larger negotiation with the linguistic, political, economic forces in the society. He goes beyond the region, beyond the community in the prose. The time that he engages is past, present, and future. His prose too is quite optimistic. There is a strong reformist spirit in most of his prose.

His plays, in contrast to his prose and poetry, come across as more pessimistic. His linguistic finesse, and experiments are far superior in this plays than his poetry or prose. The plays engage with the past and present time of the community. However, like his poems the plays too are heavily grounded in the Mangalorean community, which is what makes them special and unique.

In the final assessment it becomes clear that the different genres of literature that he engages with, bring out different types of creativity and creative genius of Cha. Fra. While the plays and poems have really brought out the unique creative facets of Cha. Fra. novel and short story have not really blossomed in his hand, a point that might open up huge possibilities' for research not only in the case of Cha. Fra. but also in understanding creativity itself.

### **Possibilities for Future Studies**

This being one of the first theoretical engagement with Cha. Fra.'s plays, and the researcher has gone through all available critique of Cha. Fra.'s works, following possibilities for future research emerge for him.

First and foremost, there is a great need to collect all his works and publish which are scattered all over Goa, Bombay, Mangalore and the Middle East. Although quite a few of his plays and poems are collected and published in two volumes there is enough material for couple of more volumes of his works.

Second, dating of Cha. Fra.'s works is also an urgent need. That will help better locate his works in terms of their spacio-temporal dimension.

Third, a more in-depth study especially of his short stories, serialised stories needs to be undertaken.

Fourth, there is a need to study him vis-à-vis other Konkani playwrights and those in other languages. This will not only help better locate Cha. Fra. within the Konkani theatre and literature but also as against literatures in other languages.

Fifth, a greater study of his language needs to be done, stylistic, sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic. The researcher is sure, that such a will offer tremendous insights to applied linguistics.

Sixth, influence of Cha. Fra. on other writers in Konkani as well influence of other works and writers from French, English, Marathi and Parsi theatre on Cha. Fra., also need be studied.

Sixth, application of Freudian, Jungian and Lacanian psychoanalysis could also be fruitful.

Seventh, an inquiry into why Cha. Fra.'s genius does not shine in the case of short stories and novels would throw up interesting outcomes both in the case of Cha. Fra. and understanding creativity.

Lastly, an extended semiotic study of his works would also throw up far greater understanding of his works.

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